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MELTON DE MOWBRAY :

OR,

THE BANKER'S SON.

A NOVEL.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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MELTON DE MOWBRAY;

OR, THE

BANKER'S SON.

CHAPTER I.

ST. JAMES'S STREET IN 1791.

“ Oh, the days when I was young ! ” — *Old Song.*

Gen. Geo. Fane, 7 Red. St. Cambridge 1851.

SINCE the date to which our heading refers, great and signal changes have occurred in the paths of fashion. M'Adam, in his mud-boots, has advanced to the threshold of the court; granite has crumbled into dust at his uplifted hand. Swallow Street, as the song says, has been swallowed up; swamps have been drained to dry ground; five flat fields have

been cropped with places, streets, and squares ; and “ the King’s Road ” has, very properly, led the way to a new court-end of the town. St. James’s Street itself, though it stands where it did, has grown so prodigiously tall, has so improved in its features, that it lately proved fatal to an antiquarian Conservative, who, returning from the Celestial Empire, passed, like a mourner, through overwhelming improvements, till, coming to this time-hallowed spot, he sank in despair, and bit the dust of M’Adam.

Nevertheless, it must be allowed that the sun used to shine as brightly in the days gone by as now. If Hoby, the once leviathan, has been shadowed by a greater monster of the deep ; if the guardsmen have been squeezed to a thread-paper ; if hotels, worthy of the capital, look with contempt upon the retiring charms of “ the Thatched House ; ” if banking-shops, like palaces, have risen from the earth ; if, in short, all has been changed for the better, except the red brick hospital which Britons have converted to a palace for the monarch of England ; if, with this melan-

choly exception, St. James's Street has become more worthy of its courtly name, the heavenly powers pursue their given course as they did, neither dimmed nor dazzled by the atoms which the pride of man has piled one upon the other.

It was a bright, clear, sunshiny day, in the month of June. A long line of dirty, lumbering straw-bottoms held their appointed stand in the centre of the street. Cabs were undreamed of then; nay, there was not so much as a chariot to enliven the rank, for these better halves had not, as yet, received the sanction of a government, which then dreamed as little of reform as the possibility of travelling thirty miles an hour by steam. The coachies, one and all, had vacated their seats, and, in compliment to their goddess of plenty, were spending the produce of darker days in smoke and heavy wet: one solitary, ragged man, with his brazen order dangling from his neck, an apron cut out of an old sack, short and mystic as a freemason's, a pull of hay under one arm, and a slender portion in one hand, hobbled from coach to

coach, dipping the dry morsel in water, and tempting the weary brutes to eat. Few, however, accepted the proffered meal; nay, in more instances than one, the richer banquet of dry, husky oats, strapped up to the eyes, hung unheeded by the nodding head: in fact, they preferred the dreamy *dolce far niente*; and this amphibious species of water-god, seeing his occupation at an end, retired to his pails, turned one upside down for a throne, drew a bit of pipe from his waistcoat, listened to the stream which trickled on the sloppy pavement, “and drowned all his cares in a whiff of tobacco.”

If the horses, left to themselves, and no longer startled by a rude tickling of the nose, forgot their sufferings in sleep, and eased the weaker of the legs which were left to stand upon; so, also, some animals, of a species nearly extinct, were easing legs of Herculean muscle, and recruiting their strength in the arms of Morpheus.

In those days it was not the fashion for gentlemen to keep coffee-houses; the knave of clubs had not hit upon the clever trick of

getting an excellent dinner for next to nothing, while the deserted wife is left to rule the roast at home. "Brookes's" and "Boodle's" were then, with little exception, the all-in-all in the shape of clubs, and established for a very different purpose. They were the houses of call for Whig and Tory, for Foxite and Pittite; each, in its way, the focus of high patrician caste. Close to the latter stood a mean, dirty public house, the celebrated house of call of a then existing race, the Irish chairmen. Opposite to this, and bordering the pavement, was ranged a line of empty sedans, their long poles mixing amicably like legs in a mail-coach, or, in some instances, resting against the walls of the smoke-stained, chequered tap-house; the vehicles themselves were varied in appearance, but most, if not all, gave, like the straw-bottoms, a lesson to the moralist. If, unlike their rivals, they had not bodies emblazoned by the pomp of heraldry, there was enough to point to the high estate from which they had fallen; tarnished coronets and faded velvet told of the titled fair which they oft had borne to court, and

spoke of the nothingness of all on earth, doomed, as they are, from man to the meanest thing, to fade, decay, and see corruption.

Facing this line of mementos, which then impeded the steps of the gay and thoughtless, was a long wooden bench attached to the tap-house, and reserved for the chairmen, or porters, when not otherwise employed; and here it was that a set of powerful men were basking in the sun, and, like the jaded cattle, making up for the loss of sleep during the previous night.

So far the comparison held good, for the dissipation of the high and low holds holiday in the hours of darkness; but the team of the rich and titled varies, *toto cælo*, from that of the humbler rake. While the poor brutes, born to go on four legs, had scarcely a leg to stand upon, the bipeds shewed muscle enough to carry the greatest of the great, if not a world within itself. Their ribs were clothed with the fat of malt; their collars, thrown open, shewed necks as powerful as bulls; their long-tailed coats of office were hung up in a room behind the tap; but the more ne-

cessary insignia, the leather pole-straps, rested on shoulders which, in width and breadth, bore ample proportion to the calves of the leg.

Still nearer to the court were mean, shabby houses with shops; some a few feet square, others but narrow strips, or, in courtly phrase, *attachés* to the great. Here and there a narrow alley led to unhallowed ground, or to the well-known buttery yecept “ St. James’s Larder;” where many a poor gentleman fed in clover from the fragments gathered from the Guards’ mess, and never questioned the government for spending thousands per annum in nourishing the young and warlike scions of nobility.

Such are amongst the leading features which have perished with the lapse of years, and which were prominently conspicuous in the year one thousand seven hundred and ninety-one. We have said that the day was pre-eminently brilliant; and, if we add, that the hour-hand stood, or rather flew, between five and six in the evening, the reader will readily picture the bustle and racket of the rolling carriages, the knots of idle politicians,

the ranks of still more idle loungers, besides the motley varieties which occasionally floated with the stream of fashion.

At that period, St. James's Street was scarcely better paved than Piccadilly ; a pass long celebrated for the bumps and thumps with which it enlivened the heaviest in going to, or returning from, a dull drive in Hyde Park. We say, enliven ; for, let the moderns talk as they will, nothing awoke the spirit of wit, and flash of speaking eyes, so much as the glorious din of the echoing granite. Sound is the key-note for mirth. What so awkward as a dead pause before dinner ? Bring in the noisy little prattlers, and all goes on well. Does not the eloquent clatter of knives and plates break the stiffness of a formal dinner party ? Cannot one noisy fellow set the thing going, and keep the table in a roar ? Do not women talk most at a concert ? boys, when the organ plays loudest ? Do not —. But why multiply cases ? There is no denying this fount of inspiration, which — woe to London ! — is replaced by the dull monotony of mud or dust.

In addition to this, we must remind the rising generation, that, as yet, the Prince Regent had not opened the dark windings of Swallow Street. Bond Street admitted no rival near, and was to St. James's Street what a pipe is to a funnel. Now, as the stream—probably out of compliment to the sister kingdom—ran both up and down the pipe, it may easily be imagined that the wide opening of the funnel was wont to be in a most glorious state of confusion.

Though the heat was powerful, there was a crisp and elastic buoyancy in the air; the sun burned clear, as we sometimes say of a winter fire, and, like the bright unclouded face of that delightful companion, its rays imparted cheerfulness around. Nature, animate and inanimate, seemed to have acknowledged its influence; the very carriages had unfolded like the petals of a flower, and given to the gaze of the world the beauties of creation within; indeed, if we except the drowsy eyes of the two species of beasts of burden we have noticed, we scarcely know what had not opened to the touch of the orb of life—

hearts, lips, shops, purses, parasols, doors, and windows; at which latter we make a halt, as it brings us to the hero of our tale.

With arms crossed, and slightly leaning against a pilaster which divided the window of Brookes's, stood one in the dawn of manhood—nothing unusual, we grant, so long as creation goes on, and goes on increasing; but, it is one of those rules which mark the Almighty's infinite power, to make all things alike according to their species, yet no two of the same species without a difference. We will not digress; but what a field of contemplation! What conviction of omnipotence does this open to the mind! The blades of grass, of corn—each—all, *sui generis*, are known and identified at a glance; yet, of all the countless leaves which robe the summer, no two can be found precisely the same. Thus, with the human race, is the same infinite variety displayed; and, as we have eyes proportioned to the means of seeing our fellows, if not ourselves, we detect, at once, any marked variety of human vegetation, from the shadowy fibres of an *anatomie*

vivante, to the wide-spreading honours of an alderman's rotundity.

The being to whom we have alluded was a variety as widely placed from these as heaven from earth; one who formed, if ever such formation did exist, the very *juste milieu* between the two extremes. Some five feet ten in height, he could neither be lost in a crowd, nor feel ashamed of his height upon entering a room: his limbs, cast in the mould of grace and beauty, united lightness and activity with the firmness of strength; his cheeks, though free from the rosy unmeaning lustiness of youth, glowed with the tints of health; teeth, small and regular, partially displayed their white enamel when he whispered to lady fair, joked with his compeers, or debated with his seniors: at other moments, the guardian lips closed so firmly over the treasures they concealed, that, judging from these, one would have augured a firmness of character at variance with the eyes: these, large, dark, intelligent, and soft, wandered from point to point, now laughing merrily at some stroke of humour, now shedding

their warm, almost voluptuous, warmth on some admiring beauty ; and if, within these dark and wandering orbs, there were sterner thoughts and fiercer passions, these were veiled by the long and silken lash ; if they could be glazed by the tear and depth of feeling, such probability was hidden by the mask of fashion, worn, like the armour of our ancestors, from boyhood upwards. If any thing were in extremes, it was the glossy uncompromising blackness of the hair, which clustered on the head, and fell in gentle waves beside a high expansive brow.

“ But his nose,” cries some fair admirer of manly beauty.

We allow the omission ; but does the lady know what a touchy and delicate point we are requested to handle ?

“ Yet, what’s a hero without a nose ?”

There is something in that, to be sure ; so, at the risk of offending that sensitive member, we conclude our hero’s description by saying that his nose was slightly aquiline, if that term may be applied to the classic and beautiful nose of him whose eagles were scat-

tered by one who, in this point, had certainly bigger pretensions to the eagle's outline. Indeed, the face, which we have been thus called upon to complete, strongly resembled, even to the absence of whiskers, the earlier portraits of Napoleon the Great.

Such was Melton de Mowbray, or, to conform to the style insisted upon by his rich godfather, Miles Melton, Esquire. Such was Melton de Mowbray; one whom few amongst his own sex could pass and not observe; one who seemed formed for woman's idol—who, seen but once, was treasured in the memory for ever. So much for nature; and, ere we turn to the fine arts, so happily cultivated by those who cover, yet not conceal, the outer man, we ought, perhaps, to have spoken of an ornament common in these days, but much less so in former times, namely, a pair of moustaches. Yet, even in the present day, Melton de Mowbray's would have ranked in no common order, so widely did they differ from those disgusting hangers-on which rob the lips, and lap up soup like the fringes of a Scotch terrier: the dimpled centre of the

upper lip was clear; the mouth, with all its silent language, was ever visibly audible, but two distinct and dark lines arched towards the corner of the mouth, and then, leaving that expressive point, turned upwards with a graceful curve. So perfect was its *contour*, that we scarcely wonder at our giving the description with the works of art. To proceed: as the Jewish fashion of wearing beards was unknown, the neck was enveloped by a square of white muslin, which, in case of necessity, would have made a very comfortable tablecloth. Let not the exquisite of these days, strapped in a ready-made tie, sneer at the glories of the past: the merit of a man was then his own, and not the shopman's or the washerwoman's. Alas! poor woman of the suds! even fashion is robbing thee of bread and fame; and, in the cause of charity, we deprecate the tasteless style of casing the neck and chest in unwashed black, as if a man had neither a shirt to his back nor collar to his shirt. If for no other cause than that of unbecomingness, we advocate a change of style as well as of linen: black cannot harmonise with the skin; even

widows reject the idea, except for the first few weeks, when they feel they are bound to look ugly, and know that they may not marry a second—just yet.

As the dirty device of false collars had not been brought to light, the lover's wings which fanned the cheeks of Melton de Mowbray shewed to the world that he wore a clean shirt beneath the ample folds of his white neckcloth; and, although this was crossed on the chest, and confined by a gold race-horse, with a jockey finely painted in enamel—partly owing to the well-formed neck, and greatly to the master's hand, this mass of muslin sat as light and easy as if it had been moulded to the body; no crease where none should be; no tumbled wrinkle betraying doubt or hesitation in forming the Gordian knot.

“Melton,” said a friend one day to him, looking with awe and admiration at the perfection of the work, “how is it you manage your tie?”

“*Nascitur, non fit,*”* was the reply.

* For the benefit of any lady of the old school, who may honour us by the perusal, we add a translation: —“The talent is heaven-born, not acquired.”

“ Nonsense ! ” said the other. “ You quote Latin, because you wish to keep the secret, and fancy I could not construe your meaning.”

“ And can you really, my good fellow ? ” asked Mowbray, with surprise.

“ Partly,” answered the friend, who was noted for having passed through a public school without doing an exercise for himself. “ I knew you were quizzing, for you told me it did ‘ not fit.’ ”

Melton laughed more heartily than usual at this happy interpretation ; and, when he had recovered his powers of speech, he assured his friend that his attempting the tie was idle and hopeless ; that, indeed, he owed all to the chance resemblance between himself and Milton.

“ There is but the shadow of a letter between us ; and, as Milton wrote when he was blind, so does Melton tie by inspiration.”

This was a joke beyond the translator’s power ; so he looked foolish, and departed as wise as he came.

Next to the neckcloth sat a waistcoat of delicate buff, moderate in length, but notched at the bottom, in the fashion of our forefathers ; who, living in the days of peace and plenty,

wore waistcoats almost as long as a bishop's apron, but somewhat less decorous, being cut in the centre into two sides of a triangle, to give freedom to the limbs. A dress coat, as now we should term it, of blue, with a plain gilt button ; breeches, of spotless white, which clipped the knees like a garter ; boots, with tops of pearly cream-colour, worthy of the skies of Claude, or of Hoby's shop, and furnished at the heels with spurs, curved in the neck, completed the attire, from head to foot, of Melton de Mowbray. The *addenda*, of hat, thin white doeskin gloves, and jockey's whip, mounted with gold twist, lay on the table, beside a host of papers and political pamphlets.

Facing the window was a groom in attendance, a boy in size, but in age a man of some forty or fifty years. So easy and perfect was his seat, that he looked "a part and parcel" of the horse and saddle which he crossed. His dress, for those days, was singularly plain : no hatband, no lace, no trappings, except a broad belt, which buckled round the waist of a black frock-coat, for then, be it said by the way, the frock-coat was confined to our coachmen and grooms ; and, as to trousers, such

equipment for a horseman had never been seen, but in the solitary case of an apprenticed tailor, who was caught up from a shopboard, flung across a horse, and despatched to Brentford, to tell Mrs. Shears that a razor had cut her husband's thread of life: a pair of buckskin breeches peeped from beneath the coat, and harmonized with the top-boots, redolent of the matchless Hunt and Hoby of the age.

The horse which he rode, and the one which he led, were each perfect in their way: the one, a powerful and noble roadster; the other, a dappled gray Arabian, in which were blended the happy union of spirit and gentleness; with pasterns springing as whalebone; a mane, fine as the human hair; and a long tail, glossy as silver, and waving like streams of light.

Thus having placed before the reader, master, man, and cattle, we shall leave Mr. Brown, the master of the horse, to dream of the turf, dikes, ditches, raspers, and stone walls; Melton de Mowbray to gaze on the passing crowd, and catch the rays of woman's eye, which shot like meteors as they dashed and darted in their course.

One thought, ere we close the chapter, and

start anew to make some further introductions. Were it possible, we would please all parties. It may be, that some one, as fond of horses as ourselves, and tempted by the title, may read thus far, and complain, that, although both master and man are dressed very tidily, not a word has been said of that grand criterion, the horse's coat. To any such, "no-reading man," we beg leave to answer, they were both as well *dressed* as their master.

CHAPTER II.

BROOKES'S.

“ And man himself is but the fruit of earth,
Which, like the vintage of the rosy grape,
Too rarely ripens to perfection :
But when it does, succeeding ages turn
To gaze with wonder on departed worth,
And say — ‘ We ne’er shall see the like again.’
Ay, by my troth, and those were sunny days !
A galaxy of genius — talent — wit,
Which makes the present dearth but doubly drear.”

A. BIRD.

It has been said, that every man likes to see himself in print ; and, though with us the trials and commerce of the world have turned this ambition to indifference, we still remember the thrilling delight with which we gazed upon the maiden effort of our boyhood in the witty chronicles of Perry—it was the only thing we ever could learn by heart ; and, even now, so far from thinking that the merit was all our own, we modestly believe that one of

the muses descended from heaven and perched upon our ear for the happiness of singing our lines for the livelong day;—yes, it was a delight! and when, in a coffee-room, we heard one stranger read them to another, and laugh immoderately, we could scarcely refrain from embracing our clever admirers, and acknowledging that we were the author. Oh! how our heart was opened, how we longed, though costly in those days, to treat them to *lafitte*, *châteaux margaux*, and champagne!

Such feelings have long been dead within ourselves; and we could almost reject the past as the wild dream of fancy, were it not borne out by the observation of mankind. If, then, such was our delight on seeing our production received and printed for its merit—such as it might be—what must not be the ecstasy of a young legislator, who, knowing that he had spoken confounded nonsense, sees, on the following morning, his speech rendered into sense by the reporter's wand?

More than one such happy man was intent upon that which was given as his own, while the thoughtless Mowbray was reading or

skimming the passing crowd. He had noticed the tender politicians, laughed at the trembling anxiety they betrayed, and thought within himself, what fools they were about nothing.

“ Stilton,” cried Mowbray, fixing on one in the darkest corner of the room; “ Stilton, my dear fellow,” he repeated, seeing that his voice was unheeded, “ why is it you drink all green for your breakfast?”

“ I!” replied the astonished orator, startled from his self-admiration—“ upon my word, I take all black.”

“ Then, what can make your hand shake so this morning?—the fatigues of the House?—They tell me you spoke—was it so?” inquired Mowbray, maliciously.

“ Why—yes—that is, I—the Speaker—I addressed—that is, I caught his eye—and he—that is—I—”

“ I understand,” said Mowbray, cutting short the attempted explanation of Stilton, which partook of his style in the House: “ yes, yes—it’s quite clear—late hours, and the efforts of eloquence; but, why has the

editor printed your speech in a type larger than the rest?"

"It is very odd," answered Stilton, looking down at the papers; and, from having seen no speech but his own, believing that such was really the fact.

A somewhat less passionate investigation convinced him that Mowbray was mistaken, and he was about to stammer forth the fact, that his words were not bigger than those of the prime minister, when he saw that Mowbray was surrounded by a knot of men about his own standing, who were intent upon characters much more interesting than the parts of speech of the honourable member in the corner.

Between Mowbray, his friends, and the disconcerted Stilton, was a group of widely different calibre; men, marked amidst the talent of the age, and engaged in the discussion of those important measures which have since been carried into effect by the Whigs and Tories of our own time.

The most conspicuous was a short, stout man, who, from his breadth of back, and slouching, slovenly style of dress and figure,

looked even shorter than he was: his hair was cropped short behind, and unpowdered; his features were large and coarse; his manner inelegant; nay, he frequently indulged in the profane habit of poking his hands into his breeches or waistcoat pocket, and still more often committed the other vulgarity of thrusting his thumbs into the arm-holes of his waistcoat; and yet, it were impossible to look upon the eyes which flashed from beneath their dark and shaggy eye-brows, or note the power and expression which beamed around the mouth, and call or think him vulgar. Such was Fox when silent; but, hear him in the senate—mark him as he kindled with his theme—see him gasping, struggling to pour forth the foaming depths which choked his utterance, till at length, as his clenched hand fell with a giant's force upon the trembling table, the flood-gates of the mind were burst, and the nation now listened with awe to the overwhelming powers of argument which thundered from his lips—now, was carried with the stream of stern and massive eloquence, or stood dazzled and transfixed by the flashes of his wit,

—witness this but once, and all was forgotten but the transcendent genius of a man who seemed to have been formed in nature's widest contrast to his great and gifted rival.

Be our opinions what they may, we would rather sever our hand from its wrist than add fuel to the evil and unchristian spirit of the day, the black and slanderous venom of party feeling. Far, far from our native country, we are above the dim and tainted atmosphere of politics, and look with sorrow on the violence of either side : distance has not chilled our prayers for the land which gave us birth ; and would that our countrymen could see the distortion and deformity of their blackened features ; would they could mark, as we do, the fiendish joy of thousands sworn in enmity to England, who watch with bitter smiles an envied, hated kingdom, divided against itself.

We say thus much, since, in describing the friends and associates of Melton de Mowbray, we have chanced to fall in with the then opposition of the day ; but the reader greatly errs, if he thinks we are about to pander in politics,

and add to the darkness of blinded passions ; rather will we desert our hero for a time, and pass from Brookes's to Boodle's, to conclude our sketch of Fox by blending our tribute with that extraordinary man, who, as a boy, sustained the weight of a mighty nation — the equally immortal Pitt.

In fancy we look upon the walls of our library and see the two before us ; they seem like light and shadow, inseparable, giving relief to each other, as if one could neither be described nor understood without the other : in figure, the one as already painted, the other tall, slight, and graceful. In language and action, the one like the mountain floods, pent up for a time, and then bursting forth with wide and overwhelming grandeur ; the other, everflowing like the silver Thames, with beauty, harmony, and power — whether the tide, which, in its might, sweeps all impurity away, yet also threatens, or destroys, the barriers and landmarks of our ancestors ; or whether that more sluggish stream, which enriches much, yet leaves the growing weeds, the rush and mud unmoved — which of the two be bet-

ter, we will not discuss. We must return to Brookes's.

On the right of Fox stood one who beat Charlie himself in the girth of his corporation : if, indeed, he were the less conspicuous of the two, this arose from the suit of rusty, greasy black, which generally enveloped this *great* man : his features were far from wanting in intelligence ; but there was a swinish cast of eye, an unctious sensuality about the mouth, befitting the man who could go to the Piazza, and order turtle and a haunch of venison for one. Like that of his neighbour, his build was bulky and inelegant ; indeed, both might be likened to the boiler of a steam-engine, on which, however ungraceful its form, no one can look without thinking of the power which is generated within. Gilray, in drawing the Duke of Norfolk to the life, was wont to add some outward signs, and always gave to his portentous waistcoat a double tier of pockets, from each of which protruded the neck of a bottle of port : his grace, in the language of the day, was a four-bottle man at least.

On the left was one, restless, yet easy in

his attitudes, alternately gay and grave ; now bending the powers of his mind to the granite work of which Fox, in his might, was laying the foundation-stone, and, if the assistant could neither wield nor lay the massive block, he could at least handle the silver trowel, and cement the work in hand ; above all, he could lighten their labour by wit as bright, sparkling, and abundant as mica in the granite. There was no mistaking the man ; he stood alone in the galaxy of earthly genius, as one of that race which seems to form an exception to a general rule, and had, from generation to generation, talent and beauty as the heir-looms of their family : but poor Sheridan's days of beauty were departed ; difficulties, disappointment, and debauchery, had already planted their furrows in the cheek, hectic patches had given symptoms of a broken constitution ; and the rosy blushes on the nose confessed a shameless devotion to the habits of deep conviviality : still, however, there was the light and dancing eye, which marked him as the son of wit and humour ; for the flashes of his ethereal spirit were never quite extin-

guished until life had fled; and, such was their exhaustless play, that if aught had tickled Sheridan's fancy, though sitting on a council of death, we suspect that he must have smiled, at least, in the laughing crows'-feet of his eye.

The attack upon Stilton, made with something of a genial spirit by his favourite, Mowbray, had not escaped his ear; neither could he resist the temptation of interrupting the work they were upon.

But, a few words on the man who formed the fourth.

Opposite to Fox was one, who, had his heart been read, regarded young Mowbray with more interest than any of the party. If this were not apparent, his affections and engagement to Mowbray's mother, ere she bestowed her hand on Sir John, his father, were generally known in the world; but, for the present, we have only to paint him as one of the political *partie carrée*. His dress and appearance were peculiar, partaking of the past, the present, and his own fashion; on the whole, more singular than old-fashioned. There was one predominating feature which

immediately stamped him as the country gentleman ; but, if a certain freshness of complexion, a round, full vigour of muscle, denied an intimacy with the habits and hours of fashion, with the gambler and drunkard, there was a striking intelligence from the lofty forehead to the rounded chin, which placed him immeasurably above the mere country squire, who is fixed, like the turnstile on his property, and moves but in his own narrow circle. If William de la Bere had a fault, it was the reverse : his comprehensive mind sought to grasp at too much for the means of perfection in any thing ; he laboured to know the world and all therein ; he was a scholar, statesman, lawyer, draughtsman, sportsman, poet, and mechanic. He had dived into the mysteries of all trades ; he was practically at home, from the pointing of a pin to the innermost ball within ball of a Chinese turner. If he had not received the freedom of the Pin-makers' Company, he knew every hole and corner of the city. Antiquary, though original, he had wandered, hand-in-hand, with Stowe, and ransacked all that was hallowed by the records

of the past. Such was the inward man ; his exterior was as various. Even the grace and eloquence of the handsome Duke of Bedford had failed in persuading his friend to submit his tail to the shears, or grudge the payment of the powder-tax. The hair was, accordingly, powdered and pomatumed, and then combed back from the expansive forehead, as if the stream sat in a straight line for the honoured tail. On either side of the head it was dressed full, and formed a fit support for a hat, low in the crown, but, at least, three inches deep in the brim, extending like a Swiss roof which keeps off rain and sun alike. His stock, or neckcloth, was fastened behind with a gold buckle, and rivalled in texture and purity the shirt with plaited frill and ruffles. A green surtout, cut much in the fashion of a hunting-coat, was a magazine of pockets ; a sketch-book was in one, a note-book in another ; the others, like a pawnbroker's shop, were open to all sorts of " miscellaneous articles " — gleanings from old shops, lists of new inventions, scarce books, or modern pamphlets, mixed with stray feathers from cock or parrot,

as hackle for his flies. Nothing, in short, escaped his eye, which, like his mind, seemed every where at once; and, though no articles, "by his majesty's most gracious letters patent," passed unobserved, the reader must bear in mind, that in those days we had not a patent for all things save woman's tongue and little babes, the only manufactory which seems to have defied the improvement of man. If these store-rooms were sometimes filled to overflowing, we must not omit to say that one side-pocket was always reserved for a fine white cambric handkerchief. As he never rode except in buckskin, and never passed a day without riding, such was the favoured style of breeches. His whole attire, though singular, was scrupulously neat; indeed, we have heard his dressing-room likened to a nobleman's park, for its stock of buckskins. Wet or fine, the same pair of hand or thigh-gloves were worn but one day; and, whether the equipment terminated in top-boots, with straps and buckle at the back, or, as on the present occasion, with silk stockings and short nankeen gaiters, the perfect gentleman rose above

the quaintness of costume as distinctly as his step, bearing, and noble mien, marked vigour of mind and body in one on the wrong side of fifty.

In politics, William de la Bere was independent—almost too much so to satisfy the Whigs, whose leading principles he adopted in heart and conscience. Had the phrase existed, he and his forefathers might have been termed, “highly conservative.” His family had followed the fortunes of the Norman conqueror, and continued to conserve, not only what they had won by the sword, but what they had also subsequently gained by wisdom and alliance. Their estates had multiplied and prospered; and, from time to time, their conservatory was enriched by that fruit, whose excellence, like that of the medlar, consisted in its rottenness. Not less than four boroughs, in a high and desirable state of decay, had been added to the family stock, and descended to the present representative; but the man, who was honest enough to make a true return of his income, and clung to his powdered tail, was likely to be a reformer

without becoming a destructive. He spurned the cloak of falsehood, which attempted to cover injustice or abuse. There he was a Radical: "the older the cloak," he would say, "the sooner it should be torn away as a worthless garb; but, in attempting to restore, we must not destroy." Nay, he had even condemned the system of rotten boroughs; and, entangling worldly wisdom and human frailty with the pricks of conscience, he had lately sold, for a large sum, three out of the four; one, venerable as the walls of a decayed Stilton, he reserved for a friend in need, while his wealth and influence ensured a seat for himself within the county. The abolition of slavery, the Catholic emancipation, Irish tithes, had, each in their turn, been under discussion, when the conversation turned to the system of boroughs.

"They tell me, De la Bere," said the Duke of Norfolk, "that you have sold your boroughs. Is this wise or kind to your party?"

"Party! I hate the word," retorted De la Bere; "it is honest, at all events, and you

know my opinion on that subject. It is a fabric based on injustice—it cannot, will not, stand. I foresee its destruction; and you, Fox, with the force of simple truth, should be the man to slay the foul weed which has sprung from corruption. At your touch, at your word, it would wither from the land.”

“ But, like the poor slaves,” answered Fox, his eyes beaming with humanity as he made the allusion; “ this weed has become an article of traffic—infamous, damnable, if you will; but would it be just to spoil the holders of either without remuneration? they may have erred from precedent, and want of thought.”

“ Right!” replied De la Bere, abruptly: “ I say ay with all my heart to that, and ——”

“ And, therefore,” said Sheridan, with one of his quiet, wicked smiles, and alluding to the good bargain which De la Bere had made, “ you have taken justice into your own hands, lest your country should grudge it. I wish I were a prophet, and knew how to grow rich by my foresight!” he added, with a smile,

partly founded in truth, yet mostly in mockery and play.

De la Bere felt the allusion, and a slight tinge was added to the glow of health as he glanced at motives which he had, probably, overlooked until then. With this there was something like anger, and he was about to reply, when Fox, starting from a short abstraction, said, with deep and earnest feeling—

“ De la Bere, you are my friend, and you, at least, will not desert me ; but, was this a fitting moment to lessen your power to aid ? the storm is lowering ; ere long it may fall on my head, you have cut the sinews of the arm which might have served your struggling friend.”

It was in the previous month that Burke had solemnly renounced the friendship of Fox in the House of Parliament ; the memory of that touching and extraordinary scene was fresh in the minds of all ; and if he, the lion of the House, the stern, yet generous leader, had not only been touched to tears, but sobbed aloud — if he who, when he had mastered

himself, unmanned all others, and, piercing the adamant of party spirit, called forth the tribute of a tear from his deadliest opponents — if a man with such simplicity and power still betrayed the shadow of weakness and regret, he could only be honoured and forgiven.

His Grace of Norfolk read his recollections of the past and fears for the future; and, in a voice which seemed to issue from the bung-hole of a hogshead, he endeavoured to extract consolation from the wise prophet.

“ I told you,” he said, addressing himself to De la Bere, “ you were neither wise nor kind to sell your boroughs; but, surely, you have some left?”

“ Only one out of four, and that,” replied De la Bere—his kindness of heart getting the better of all other views—“ and that I promise to retain.”

“ Ha! ha!” cried Sheridan, laughing at the loophole he had got: “ so, with all your love of right, you take three steps towards honesty, and, weary with the effort, halt on the fourth as a seat for yourself.”

“ You know I sit for the county,” said De la Bere, with much of his Norman pride.

“ Beg pardon, slight error—forgot that you stood for the county ; but, as the greatest may not stand for ever, it’s wise to have a seat in case of need. And for you, De la Bere, who are a draughtsman and poet, I must confess that the borough of Barebones is the very thing.”

“ Where are you driving now ? ” asked his Grace, somewhat impatient as his dinner-hour approached.

“ No where,” answered Sheridan ; “ only just halting to admire the De la Bere property. ‘ Barebones ’ is a sweet romantic spot ; the very thing for his pencil — crumbling, rotten walls, Gothic ruin in the back-ground ; and, as for the fore-ground, in case of dissolution, he may put in his poor friend Sheridan, if he will —— ”

“ No, no ! you shan’t be buried just yet, though I fear there is no other way of stopping your tongue ; but, a truce with joking,” said Fox, as he saw the cloud of anger which had gathered on De la Bere’s brow, while

Sheridan was sketching the beauties of ‘ Barebones.’

“ Fox,” said De la Bere, “ you, at least, can be serious : if, in retaining one borough, I have acted against my principles, it is not for myself—it is ——”

“ It is for me!” said Fox, clasping his friend’s arm with his hand, while his eyes were glazed with emotion ; “ De la Bere, I read and value your intentions ; let the loss of one friend teach me the worth and wisdom of union.”

It was at this point that Melton de Mowbray indulged his fickle fancy by attacking the Stilton in the corner. Sherry’s quick ear was riveted in a moment, and, touching Fox with his elbow, to direct his attention, the four, as if with one consent, suspended their own discussions. When Mowbray had once more turned to the window, Sheridan said,—

“ That boy should be one of us.”

“ By ——! and he shall,” retorted Fox, with animation, and a thump on the table ; “ could not your Grace put him in for the borough of Marrowbone?”

“ You forget, Lord Tugwell is in there.”

“ True!” said Sheridan; “ but, De la Bere, since the poor boy is only the idle heir to millions, why don’t you *father* the houseless, and give him a seat under the wing you have left?”

“ Sheridan!” replied De la Bere, as this time the colour left his cheeks, “ there is one point on which I allow no man to joke—if Lady De Mowbray deserted her husband’s roof, and fell from the purity which she once possessed, my name shall never be linked with a fall which I would have died to avert. No apology; but on this point you now understand me!” and De la Bere moved towards the window where Mowbray was standing.

“ It’s devilish provoking!” said Fox; “ Sheridan, will you never learn to make a joke without point?”

“ I fear it is hopeless; S——r himself could not teach me!”

“ Well, then,” continued Fox, “ since you are so stupid, you must learn to borrow one from Wilberforce.”

“ That’s out of the question!” answered

Sheridan, in despair; “you know I never borrowed in my life.”

At this assertion Fox could not refrain from a hearty laugh, in which the folds of his Grace’s corporation joined. When they had recovered their *vis inertiae*, the Duke said,—

“Well, Sheridan, if you don’t borrow, you are the most singularly taking man I ever heard of.”

“Next to your Grace!” replied Sherry, in an instant; “unless Gilray be a liar, you can take more than most men!”

“And,” added Fox, with a smile, “like you, Sherry, not feel the worse for it; but,” he continued, in a whisper, while he left his Grace to digest the repartee; “but, Sherry, they do tell me you sometimes borrow right and left,” alluding to his well-known ingenuity in getting one boot from one maker, another from another, when no man in London would trust poor Sheridan with a pair.

“Damnation!” cried Sheridan, with the tone of agony, holding up one foot, and resting it on the toe, “how this confounded shoe does pinch! I fear it’s the gout. I must

hobble home, and husband my resources for the future."

"The wisest resolution you ever made," said Fox; "stick to that, Sherry, and you'll keep on your legs."

Sheridan continued his lame march towards the door, without taking notice of this wholesome advice; Fox followed with his gaze the friend of his heart, and, with warmth and simplicity of feeling, he added,—

"Good bye, good bye; God bless you, dear Sherry!"

Gout, tight shoes, and difficulties, were forgotten in an instant, as Sheridan returned, and, taking Fox by the hand, said,—

"God bless you! Charlie, you deserve it; for, 'blessed are the peace-makers;' but, another time, don't call me 'Sherry' when *he* is by my side"—pointing to the Duke of Norfolk, who, having looked at his watch, was hurrying off as fast as his unwieldy bulk could move.

"And why not?" inquired Fox, with surprise.

"It is too familiar," said Sheridan, with as much gravity as he could command; "and,

if you make a butt of me when he is by, I shall be tapped to a certainty."

"Not on the shoulder, I hope."

"Oh! what a twinge!" roared Sheridan again, as he once more held up the pinching shoe, hobbled off in the agonies of laughter at the foil he had met, and said within himself, "That fellow is like a Scotchman and his thistle—we can seldom touch either with impunity."

At this moment, others of the great men of the day entered, and the two friends parted, to meet again, like polished shears, cut their jokes in the House, and, it might be, divide it into the bargain.

CHAPTER III.

THE TELEGRAPH.

“ I sometimes almost think that eyes have ears ;
This much is true, that, out of earshot, things
Are sometimes echoed to the pretty dears
Of which I can't tell whence their knowledge springs.”
BYRON.

WE left Melton de Mowbray at the window, heedless of all that was passing in the room, and little dreaming that he had furnished a theme for discussion.

De la Bere, after seceding from the converse of his friends, took possession of a chair, and, having placed it so as to catch the chance of cool air, he crossed one leg over the other, and, diving into one of his magazines, pulled forth some newly found volume. After gazing with admiration upon the dirty venerable vellum which formed the binding, and tracing the hallowed ravages of hungry bookworms,

he turned to the opening page, and spelt the names of men who, like himself, had once possessed the treasure.

It was not certainly with this intent that he had purchased the classic pages ; but what a volume of wise, of sad reflections, was written in the cover—it was a chronicle of time, of the fleeting span of human hopes and life—it was a stern *memento mori*, yet mellowed by the records of affection, and veiled by the glowing warmth of ardent and aspiring youth. Some few amongst the names were identified with the literature of our country—they had run their race, and posterity had planted the laurel on their grave ; others had lived, died, and been forgotten : but, what of this ? each had added his quota to the volume ; each, in quaint and classic words, had given the when, and where, and by whom the gift was bestowed ; the student's college, the mark of love, esteem, reward, were told.

“ And all these men must have perished from the earth ! ” said De la Bere, with a sigh, as he traced the dates, and wondered

into whose hands the book would pass when he, too, was no more.

After remaining some little time absorbed in thought, his eyes wandered from the book to Mowbray, from Mowbray to the book.

“ Well, well!” he said, within himself; “ and what does it matter? the world will wag on as well without a De la Bere as with — it is now too late.” And, with a sigh, he closed the title-page, and, having passed his hand some three or four times over his brow, he seemed as if he had plumed the ruffles of his thoughts and temper, and was able to settle intently upon the calm and philosophic beauties of Cicero.

“ Ah, Mowbray! I say, Mowbray!” was uttered by a fat, puggy, good-natured-looking man of twenty, who, in company with one some three years his senior, was lounging towards Bond Street.

Mowbray paid no attention; but, upon his name being repeated, he quietly pulled a purse from his pocket, and, selecting from the coin current in those days a thing like a

thin bit of tin, twisted to the figure of an S, he threw it on the pavement, and said,—

“There, my good man, is sixpence for you; and now go away!”

The good-tempered Boltville, a nephew of the Duke of Flintshire, picked up the sixpence, and, extending it towards the giver, said,—

“Are you mad, or blind? it was I who spoke.”

“Is it possible?” cried Mowbray, with pretended astonishment; “a thousand pardons, but I never speak from a window to any but a beggar!”

“You stand on forbidden ground!” replied Boltville; “and I want to know if you go to the Opera to-night. What shall I do with your money?”

“Pocket the offence, and let me bribe your forgiveness.”

Boltville laughed—took the one in good part, and granted the other; for the curse of poor nobility had ever been placed before his eyes. As a boy, he had been put to his shifts to do as others, his inferiors in rank, were

enabled to do ; the hollow system practised at his home had cankered in the bud that sense of noble independence which alone enables man to hold his station in the world. Little does the yeoman, the tradesman, the millions “ well to do in the world,” dream of the mean, degrading struggles of the titled poor, in keeping up appearances.

“ Are you going to the Opera ?” repeated Boltville.

“ True !” answered Mowbray, veiling his eyes for a moment, as if to collect his ideas ; “ I ought to have known it was Saturday, by seeing the Jews in their Sunday clothes. You, of course, will be there, my lord ?” addressing Boltville’s friend, the Marquess of Downderry, whose Mosaic origin seemed, like the laws of his fathers, to be engraven in brass.

The Marquess, with a blushless oath, nodded assent.

“ So shall I !” added Mowbray.

“ At what hour ?” inquired Boltville.

“ If you want a seat in my carriage,” said Mowbray, reading the drift of the question,

“ why don’t you speak out, and play the honest beggar? At nine precise, on one condition.”

“ What’s that?” asked Boltville.

“ You must excuse my cutting you in the streets for a month to come!”

“ What?” exclaimed Boltville, looking down on a new pair of boots, and then, through the medium of a pretended bow, casting a glance of admiration on a new-born beaver; “ nay, I thought you would have praised my stylish figure to day; not gay enough, eh? why, my hat has not left André’s more than an hour.”

“ Hush, hush! name it not, my friend, that is distressingly palpable—there is the rock you split upon: nothing so vulgar as a bran new hat—excepting, always, a glossy coat, with stray threads, and one or two retiring buttons still left, *en papillote*.”

“ What would you have a man do?” asked the dejected *beau*.

“ Do!” echoed Mowbray, taking up his own hat, and removing an envious atom which had settled thereon; “ the thing is to be

done: my hats are like eternity, with neither beginning nor end; but that, probably, is a mystery too deep for such a head as thine."

"And," asked the marquess, who, doubtless, had some misgivings of Mowbray's estimate of his own Jemmy Jessamie style of dress, "does your theory extend from head to foot?"

"Undoubtedly, a man's dress should sit as easily as his skin, and, like that, be changed imperceptibly. The sight of a new coat always makes me faint; it smells too strong of the shears."

"Upon my soul," said the Jew-looking marquess, addressing himself more directly to Boltville, "I suspect your friend Mowbray buys all his clothes second-hand."

"That is capital from you," said Mowbray, catching the words; "I will tell that to Tickell, as Downton's first, last, and best. Yes—I do like to encourage the children of Israel. There is something in the notion; Boltville never looked quite like a gentleman except in a cast-off of mine."

It appeared doubtful how Boltville would

take this allusion, when Mowbray settled the matter, by saying,

“ Well then, good bye, my dear fellow, till this day month—at nine to-night, if you will—we understand each other.”

While the conversation was going on, De la Bere's eyes wandered frequently from the book in his hand to the handsome, heedless, Melton de Mowbray. Sheridan's allusion, it would seem, had unsettled his mind. He attempted to fix upon the classic pages he had opened, but the effort was fruitless. The knees were crossed, changed and recrossed at rapid intervals, and betrayed any thing but the calm abstraction of philosophy. At length, when he heard the taunting climax of the cast-off coat, he started on his legs, and, going direct to Mowbray, said in his ear,—

“ Will you never cease to be a fool ?”

“ I will try, for companion sake, when talking to you, my kind and valued friend,” said Mowbray, disarming his monitor's wrath by his frank and docile manner.

“ Well, well,” said De la Bere, “ forgive

my honest warmth; but you are a fool to make every man your enemy. That sloven Boltville will probably attain to his uncle's estates, and be assured he will never forgive you."

"Fool as you may think me, I know enough of human nature to be sure of that. My kindness stamped my condemnation when we were at Eton."

"How so?"

"Neglected by his parents, who needed every penny to support the empty glitter of appearances, and straitened in his means, he, poor fellow, was little prepared to obey a summons from Windsor Castle; and, as royal invitations admit of no refusal, I gladly lent from my wardrobe."

"I see nothing in that but a schoolfellow's kindness," remarked De la Bere.

"True; but my charity extended further. I could not take the clothes from his back when he praised the cut, and hinted that the holidays were near."

"And think you that this can be forgotten?"

“ Never—neither will it be forgiven. When the poor Boltville inherits the princely thousands of his uncle, grandeur will upset him. He will be like a seventy-four without ballast. He has no mind ; and the merely good-tempered little man is ever ruined by the greatness of riches. I must teach him defiance by times, and fight him off ere he presume to run foul of Melton de Mowbray.”

“ Proud, foolish puppy, you will live to repent this idle nonsense !” muttered De la Bere, somewhat in the spirit of prophecy ; while a young man, with elegant and distinguished air, interrupted the *tête-à-tête* by his approach.

“ Ah, my dear St. George,” cried the incorrigible Mowbray, “ your presence revives me. Boltville, and his new shining friend, the apostate lord, have nearly been my death. One would think they had been trimmed and shod to run together in a phaeton.”

“ Spare me the horrors,” said St. George ; “ we have only to look down upon the poor brutes, and drive them away ”—alluding to

the dizzy height to which fashion had elevated the body of the phaetons. "But, tell me, do you honour Northumberland House on the twenty-first?"

"That is a serious question. You know I have a character to lose; and the gates of Carlton House are the *ne plus ultra* of my eastern travels."

"For shame!" cried De la Bere, whose indignation boiled over: "and you, too, who are but the son of a city banker — I could blush for such affectation! Do cease to be a puppy—for, fool you are not. Again, I repeat, you will live to repent it."

"Bear with me but a little," said Mowbray. "I was born to be a lucky dog, so my puppyism is natural. But now you voted me a fool, and see how quickly that has passed! As to my father, poor old gentleman, how I pity his lot! but if the taint of misfortune obliged him to grub in the dirt, need the butterfly soil the bright wings he has regained? No, no, my kind friend; the blood of De Mowbray has flowed on the field of Agincourt ;

and while it beats in my veins it shall not be defiled."

"I could almost wish that misfortune would clip your wings, and change the butterfly and puppy into the man you might be."

Nothing of bitterness was mingled with the earnest manner of De la Bere's words; but, in after years, they recurred to memory, and, when he saw more than the completion of his wishes, he felt a something of self-reproach, as if the wish expressed had conspired to its fulfilment.

Mowbray, buoyant with the spirits of youth, possessing much, and heir to millions, only smiled at the vexation of his angry friend, as he once more resumed his chair, and dipped into Cicero.

"Your friend is warm, and more eccentric than ever," remarked St. George.

"I love the man," replied Mowbray, "and would do any thing to serve him—on this side of Charing Cross. I am thinking now where I can contrive another pocket in his coat."

"Heaven only knows, unless you cut it in

his back : but what can he want with another ?”

“ To put his sermons in for me.”

“ Well, try to profit by the one you have heard to-day, and remember the site of Northumberland House.”

“ Really, my blessed saint, you must absolve my ignorance. You know that when I do undertake the journey, I shall pull up all the glasses, let down all the blinds, and, like the Duke of Richmond, when he smokes, put on a dress for the occasion. Is it far from hence ? I have a dread of being stranded in the Strand, or wrecked in crossing the bar.”

“ Bar ! what bar ?” interrupted St. George.

“ That ghastly Temple Bar, bleached with the heads of the slain.”

“ Nonsense ! you know where it is. Do come ; all the world will be there ; at least, so said the fair Helen but now.”

“ Indeed ! and have you seen Lady Helen to-day ?” inquired Mowbray, with assumed indifference.

“ I met her but now in Bond Street.”

“ In her carriage ?”

“ Yes.”

“ With the mummified marchioness, her respected mamma?”

“ Yes.”

“ And do tell me, if it is true that the very lion on Northumberland House turns his tail upon the city, and holds up his head to inhale the western breezes?”

“ You had better ask Lady Helen,” said St. George, with something of irony: “ she is often at the house. But, remember the twenty-first. I see you will come, let the tail be turned whichever way it will.”

St. George had scarcely departed, when De la Bere rose, and, as if he had been watching the opportunity, went immediately to Mowbray.

“ Melton, my dear boy,” he said, resting his hand gently on one shoulder, and awakening the attention of Mowbray, which seemed to be intent upon the passing scene in St. James’s Street — “ Melton, I fear I was harsh, almost rude ; but, now, may I plead the difference of years, and warmth of my heart ?”

“ Rather,” answered Mowbray, his tone

and manner changed from gay to grave, “rather let me ask forgiveness for the levity betrayed to one so earnest for my welfare. I sometimes feel so immeasurably wretched, that my head would sink, but for the bells which tinkle on the cap I wear. Did I not play the fool, I feel that I should weep.”

“Melton!” cried De la Bere, in astonishment, subdued and touched at such an unusual tone, yet somewhat doubting its reality—“Melton, are you jesting now?”

“Would that I were,” said Mowbray, with continued earnestness. “Tell me, my honoured friend—you knew my mother?”

De la Bere started, as if an asp had stung him, and the blood forsook his cheeks, as if its current had been changed to poison. To such a being, never had the slightest allusion passed between them. He looked around ere he answered a question, the drift of which he could not conjecture. When he saw that they stood alone, he seemed to breathe more freely, and with a sigh, which mingled with his words, he said,—

“Yes, Melton, I knew her well; and

would that others had known her value better ! But you were too young ; you cannot recall her presence. I imagined that you never bestowed a thought upon her fate, and scarcely remembered that once you had a mother."

" I shall never forget her !" answered Mowbray, the tears gathering in his eyes as he spoke ; " her image fills the circle of my infant recollections. Toys, caresses, sports, and all the cherished ties of local habitation which cling to the dawning memory of others, are but a blank in mine. I see but my anguished mother, and the couch which formed my bed."

" I have heard," said De la Bere, musing on the past, " that she would plead the duties of a mother to watch the slumbers of her boy ; that, until she fled, her last and earliest daily act was to visit her child."

" I remember her but once ; but that once seems as it were but yesterday. With the early restlessness of children, I had awoke with the break of day. The birds were carolling, the sun was rising with its rays of glory, when the curtain was silently withdrawn, and

I looked upon my mother. With childish fear, or startled by some change in her features, on which, until then, I had gazed without reading, I was about to scream, when she took me in her arms, and hushed me with her kisses. Tears—torrents of scalding tears—fell from her eyes. Young as I was, I knew that she was wretched, and asked her why she cried?

“ ‘I am going, my child,’ she said at length; and when I threw my arms round her neck, and begged her to take me too, she sank on her knees, placed me in my bed, and, hiding her face in the folds of my curtain, sobbed as if her heart were breaking.

“ ‘Lady de Mowbray! Julia!’ said the voice of some one, speaking in a whisper. My poor mother started up; once more her tears and kisses mingled on my cheeks, and, with prayers and promises, she left me, to return no more.”

“ ‘Extraordinary!’” cried De la Bere, striving to hide any emotion, by doubting the memory of Mowbray, and speculating upon his having heard the particulars after the event.

“No, no,” said Mowbray, mournfully; “such was the first and only record of my infant years. I may have exaggerated her height, the majesty of her carriage, as she sought the door, and turned once more to look on me, but”—pointing to his forehead—“the first impression is too deeply engraven to wear away with time—amidst millions I should know her—and deeper, deadlier, is the record which succeeded.”

As Mowbray spoke these words, his eyes lost their deep and mellowed softness; they flashed with fire, and wore the blackness of the thunder-cloud.

De la Bere now looked with unfeigned astonishment, and forgot his own emotion, as he remarked the bloodless, trembling lips of his young favourite, and asked if he were unwell.

“Never was better,” answered Mowbray, with something of his usual sportive mood. But his feelings were too intense for mockery; the mask fell to the ground, as he added, “*And I never shall be better, until I have slain the man who robbed my mother of her honour!*”

“What’s that?” asked Lord Droneswing, an empty, addle-headed young man, who, having no ideas of his own, was always buzzing about the windows, to pick up the words of other people. He had gradually approached De la Bere and Mowbray. The closing sentence of the latter was too distinctly heard to escape his comment.

“Eh! what’s that, Mowbray?”

“Nothing,” replied Mowbray, quickly, startled by the voice of a third person; and then added, with a sarcastic sneer, “nothing, at least, to your lordship.”

His lordship returned Mowbray’s distant bow with what confidence he could rally, and sneaked to a distance. The sentence, however, was never forgotten, nor the rebuff forgiven.

“Melton! are you mad?” cried the more experienced man of the world, when the intruder had departed.

“Not quite,” said Mowbray, with resolute calmness; “but if the mind is wrecked by dwelling upon one fixed thought, I may be mad hereafter, or may be standing upon the

brink of madness now. Again, I say, if that accursed villain should ever cross my path, he shall die!"

"Melton, my dear Melton," said De la Bere, affectionately, "for Heaven's sake dismiss such fatal resolutions!"

"It cannot be! This second record of my life can be washed away by blood alone. In vain my father's menials taught me to hate her who had borne me in the womb; in vain they branded her with the names of infamy. I pitied and forgave my mother, and applied their lessons against her destroyer. As a boy, I could have killed him; as a man——"

"Melton," cried De la Bere, interrupting the sentence, "I will hear no more. Your mind must be turned to higher, nay, to holier ends. Your country, your fellow-creatures, have claims upon you. Let the canker be destroyed, ere it be too late."

"It nipped me in the bud," answered Mowbray, attempting to resume his wonted levity: "I fear there are no hopes."

"Nonsense, boy!" said De la Bere, with earnest freedom. "Fox would be your friend,

and many of the mighty host around him — why not turn to the studies of a statesman ?”

“ Answer me one question, and then I will attend. One inquiry which I wished to make, has betrayed me to a confession breathed to no other human ear. The infamy from which I, at least, can absolve my mother, descends upon her child, — it clings to my flesh, — it burns upon my brow like a living coal. Tell me, will this inheritance of sin be a barrier to my marrying — to my winning one of noble blood ?”

“ What !” exclaimed De la Bere, once more thoroughly astonished — “ why, the boy is mad ! Are you really then the fool I named you ? Do you think of marrying ?”

“ I have contemplated that folly,” said Mowbray, with meek humility, “ and really should be obliged by your opinion.”

“ Well, well, if my wisdom were universal, the world could never get on. Psha ! you silly fellow ! I will not call you the golden calf ; but, be assured, that the only child of Sir John de Mowbray is a hook of precious worth, at which mothers will snap with avi-

dity. Yes, be assured you may play the fool as quickly as you will; but, have a care; the merit is not all your own — this gilding must count for something. Now, to be rational — will you start for Moneydown at the next election?"

"Don't you think there are fools enough in the House without me?"

"I would wish to see one fool the less, by your taking the present member's seat."

"Suppose he leaves his cap on the bench, must I take to that also; or leave it to wiser heads than mine?"

"Melton," cried De la Bere, half-angry, "you promised to be serious — say yes, or no."

"Nay, really you ask too much: there is something so ill-bred in those pithy denominatives; but I will promise to consider your kindness and wishes; but bear in mind my attachment to idleness. You forget that I am a banker, and the duties of M.P. added to this, might overwhelm me with business."

"I had forgotten your name was in the firm; and well I might," said De la Bere,

with a hearty laugh, “for I know that you never did more than sign a check for your wants, and send your valet and chariot to bring back the money.”

Melton de Mowbray could not help joining in the laugh, and saying,—

“Don’t tell his grace, but Northumberland House and the Bank are my sole reasons for keeping a close carriage.”

“Psha! puppy that you are; but I won’t be foiled—these are not times for jesting: the guillotine is yet reeking with the blood of thousands. What the revolution of France may bring forth none can foresee. Kings may be turned to tyrants—kingdoms to republics—England calls on her children to stand by the helm.”

“I grant it!” said Mowbray; “and if you think that this hand can do her service, I am patriot enough to say she may command it.”

“Thank you—thank you, my dear boy!” said De la Bere, as he affectionately grasped the hand offered to the country; “for myself, my days of ambition are passed; but I feel, that if I live to see you great and good, it

would repay my age for the disappointments of my youth."

At this moment a remarkably stylish equipage came dashing up St. James's Street—the more conspicuous, as the conversation had been prolonged until the street was nearly as empty as Brookes's room; the carriage was open, and occupied by two ladies and an Italian greyhound; there was an air of fashion about each; the exquisitely tiny feet of the dog seemed born for a velvet cushion, and it held up its head, and moved its splendid black eyes as if it knew the value of the turquoise collar which encircled its neck; the senior lady sat up with a most mammaish dignity, and, but for the rouge on the cheek, might have passed for a *mummy vivante*; the junior by her side appeared the very antipodes of her mother—for such she was: indeed, in grace, form, and beauty of the eyes, she much more resembled the miniature greyhound before her.

As the street was so greatly thinned, it is not to be wondered if Mowbray's eyes were directed to the jet black steeds, as

they tore up the hill which presumed to oppose their course towards Bond Street: from the horses, no wonder either, considering how fast they flew, if his eyes should pass rapidly to the trio we have sketched: two of the three continued in seeming proud indifference to all things earthly; but one pair of eyes met those of Melton de Mowbray, and each seemed kindled at the fountain of the other. If the rapidity of movement has not led to error, a playful smile was gathered at the corners of two small pouting lips. Be this as it may, we cannot be mistaken in noticing certain ready-witted telegraphic signals, worked by fingers much too graceful and delicate for more than the labours of idleness.

The young lady, wearied with the admiration of empty beaux, was in the act of raising a gold box, filled with some pungent aromatic, when the carriage approached the window of Brookes's Club House: the effect was instantaneous, for, before the box was opened, her vision quickened, and her languid features were lit up with a thousand arch and playful

smiles. While the eyes were still darting their rays, like bright reflections, and the left hand retained the magic restorative, the forefinger of the right was first raised, then pointed to the box, and then, with two or three light and rapid movements of its tapered point, beckoned to the watchman, who stood intently gazing on these signals. An almost imperceptible wave of Mowbray's hand was the answer—the carriage disappeared, but not before a flash of mirth revealed the lady's satisfaction at the success of her wicked manœuvre.

Wicked, we say, for we suppose that we must allow the finger to have been a little naughty, and vastly indecorous: this we know, that had her mother seen the signal she would have been horrified, for she in her youth had been the pink of propriety; and, though her dry and shrivelled form now looked like an everlasting specimen, we believe she would have withered into nothing had she noticed the act of her erring daughter; but, though it might have bordered on impropriety, nay, even vulgarity, in other hands than those of Lady Helen, no one, we are

certain, could have witnessed the grace, the ease, and wit, with which the whole was conceived—the arch and playful beauty of expression, which thus silently invited Melton de Mowbray to their box at the Opera, and not have been enchanted. He, at all events, was too much flattered, too happy, to condemn.

All this was but the affair of a moment; and though on paper William De la Bere has been left behind, we can assure our readers that it formed no check upon his enthusiastic admonitions.

“England,” he continued, while Mowbray was waving to woman the hand he had but that moment offered to his country; “England, like France, may be torn by anarchy—the land which my ancestors won by the sword of chivalry may, if we watch not, be ruined and usurped.”

“Yes, certainly; oh, yes, I see it distinctly!” said Mowbray, by good luck, to the pause which reminded him that he was expected to say something.

“And,” continued De la Bere, with fervour, “would you sit by, an empty idler, and

see our rights and honours wrested by the rabble?"

"Oh, yes—certainly—by all means, my dear Helen!" replied the abstracted Mowbray, to a second pause.

"Yes, certainly! dear Hel——!"

"Nay, I hope I did not utter that profane word?" said Mowbray, quickly sensible of his error, and interrupting De la Bere in the middle of his slow and emphatic repetition of the words he had heard; "my dear sir, I do indeed quite agree with you; but, for the present, let me plead the calls of hunger against those of my country. Man cannot fight without feeding; and you asked me to dinner."

De la Bere looked at his watch, then at the empty room, and said,—

"I wish you had thought of that half an hour ago—the dinner will be ruined: this comes of talking to boys like you; but, remember, young man——;" and, as he said this, he drew up his fine and manly figure, and pointed to himself with a formidable

walking-stick ; “ remember, I am not ‘ fair Helen,’ though my cane be a maiden oak.”

“ Excellent, my dear sir !” cried Mowbray, trying to prevent all further notice of his slight mistake by a laugh ; “ our horses are waiting. I fear you’ll lose your dinner, and I shall be too late for the overture of the new opera.”

“ You forget that poor Boltville begged a seat in your carriage, and named nine for the ‘ Beggars’ Opera ;’ till then, you are my guest.”

“ True—true ; what a fool I was !” cried Mowbray, once more trying to laugh at the joke of his kind friend, and glad of any thing which led his tormentor from the recollection of “ dear Helen.”

CHAPTER IV.

THE BACHELOR'S DINING-ROOM.

“Single! — what then — woman, like Paradise,
Can add reality to dreams of bliss;
But say, did'st never hear how Eden changed,
How twined the serpent round the woman's heart,
And won the windings of her ear? Tush, man!
The bachelor may lose thy heaven on earth,
And so may'st thou, and find a very hell.
Better be moderately blest, than run
Such fearful risk. Trust me, my friend, we're not
So wretched as you think.”

A. BIRD.

IF William, the last of the De la Beres, with family, fortune, mind, and person, which fitted him to wed with the highest and loveliest in the land—with the knowledge that in himself the noble race would be extinct—that his estates would pass to the hands of a stranger—if with these, generally all-powerful, inducements to marriage, he pertinaciously shrank from the thoughts of that holy state, he sought

ample, at least the amplest possible, indemnification for the penance of celibacy.

Touching old maids, we are not, of course, fully qualified to speak. It may be with woman, that she deems both her pride and her honour concerned in the determination to marry; she may think it not only a duty to herself, but to the sex in general, to prove they are irresistible; she is prone to betray a fierceness, a blindness of courage; she must run a tilt, though the man be a monster; and often, alas! how often does she add to the beautiful army of martyrs! But, if the weaker of the sex are urged to self immolation by such false notions of honour, we know of signal exceptions, and of such we are competent to speak. We know of women blessed, and a blessing, in their singleness — women, who have proved their strength of mind, by rising above the jeers of the world, and refusing to throw themselves away; and, verily, they have their reward. Happiness, if we will but accept the boon, is so equally distributed, that we have seen such beings honoured and envied by many a fettered fair; we have seen the mother of chil-

dren, that source of certain cares and doubtful joy, drop the tear of wretchedness, as the comparison came home to the heart, and whispered of days and hopes which had fled for ever. But, if the woman of strong and independent mind is rewarded by the resources which spring from that heavenly gift, how much more is this the case in man, the lord and tyrant of creation !

Mr. De la Bere, in this point of view, was blessed above his fellows ; blessings positive and tangible, he had in abundance ; and, in addition to these, he had the melancholy pleasure of sighing for those which he had not : for those which, most probably, were beyond the range of possibility. But man, restless and dissatisfied, must dream to be happy ; the realities of this life are not enough for the soarings of that spirit which is within — there is a yearning after better things ; and the leaven of immortality rises amidst the dross of mortal man, sparkling and pure as the silver in the furnace. But such dreams, like the metal in its purity, are unfit for the uses of this world ; and, though William De

la Bere's destiny on earth was linked to one bright continued vision, we must turn for the present to substantial realities, which, by the way, he understood to perfection.

Mr. De la Bere possessed a castle in one county, an anti-Elizabethan domicile in another, and a magnificent mansion in London. It were impossible to enter either, and not read at once the possessor's title of bachelor.

In the dining-room, to which he and Mowbray had adjourned from Brookes's, there was not only all that art or taste could need for the splendour of a banquet, but also all that could complete the snuggerly of a chosen few, of a *tête-à-tête*, or console the lone and solitary owner of the room.

Solitary, did we say? — that could never be: Mr. De la Bere was never “less alone than when alone.” As a dreamer, there was one bright image, which ever dwelt the companion of his thoughts. The dead, the living, were by his side — paintings, books, and busts; the great of his time, of the ages past, of all parties, were imaged in the mournful marble, and, like the spirits of the dead, spoke by the

power of expression. Books which, of course, no wife would have tolerated, were ranged in cases, low and classic in their form, as the works they enclosed. Over these were seen the relics of Greek and Roman art. Others, lighter in their form, were filled with the bustle and bubbles of to-day, or yesterday — plays, pamphlets, squibs, wit, and satire, stood cheek by jowl, in perfect harmony ; there were the very thoughts and words of friend and foe, but, like the marble, silent. Above were strewed the portraits, done to life, by Hogarth, or by Gilray's power of truth, a volume in every line. Mothers, forgive the heresy ; but, were not these, were not the varied tales, told by the silent canvass, the sweet imaginings whispered by the sculptor's touch,—were not these, we ask, some consolation for the absence of children and wife, who, precious though they be, not only speak when they are spoken to, but too often speak, when silence would be a respite from misery ? So much for intellect, the food and companionship of mind.

Of the luxuries and comfort befitting the room, which, of all others, reminds frail man

of his mortal wants, there was no deficiency. What infinite variety of chairs to sit on, and tables to sit at ! what exquisite choice ! and yet, withal, the character of the banquet-room was preserved. Its proportions were ample befitting the massive sideboard, and the rank and file of well-drilled chairs, which stood, like a guard of honour, prepared for state occasions. These, however, interfered not with the distinct and social provisions for the few, which, like cottages or villas scattered around some regal castle, doubled their charms by the contrast with the joyless variety of pomp and show. In compliment to the season, the Indian screens had folded their gorgeous wings, and slept until the hours of darkness should return ; and in a bow-window, opening to a conservatory, an oval table was laid for two, the seats being so placed as to command a view of the Green Park, into which a small flower-garden opened. A butler and two attendants provided for every want, with noiseless celerity, during the attacks of hunger ; for, say what you will of the best that can be said, when the appetite is healthy and the dinner ex-

cellent, it is neither convenient nor agreeable to talk much ; indeed, when the mouth is full, and the stomach empty, words are particularly ill-bred. Politeness enjoins us to listen with respect to the calls of hunger ; and, excepting when a man is compelled to eat his own words, mastication and elocution never can proceed in harmony together. But, when this compliment had been paid, and silence obtained, by the art and genius of a French cook, a satisfied gentle nod of the head to the attentive butler, signified De la Bere's wish to be left, that he might enjoy his friend and bottle with uninterrupted freedom.

We have said, that Mr. De la Bere avoided the excesses too prevalent in those days ; but he had an honest abhorrence of water, and held, that a bottle of generous old port could do harm to no one. On this point he was most particular, and conspicuously an old bachelor. The cloth removed, and short but heartfelt thanks offered to the Giver of all things, the dear "dummies" were placed right and left ; not those plebeian lodging-house

things, on three legs, with three slices of wood, crowned with a red leather cruet-stand, and empty paper-stoppered bottles, but tables in design, worthy of being classed as altars to Bacchus. Excepting on occasions of form, De la Bere never invited more than six guests, nor allowed a cork to be drawn unless in his presence; indeed, there were certain bins of superlative flavour, upon which no hand but his own was allowed to operate. To effect this with geometrical precision, on one of his "dummies" was placed a thing much like a gun-carriage, and the resemblance was stronger, when the bottle was reclined therein. The simile might be continued, by likening the corkscrew to the worm which draws the charge; by the screw under the breech, which elevated the piece, and shot "with beautiful precision"—as heroes say, when they slaughter some thirty fellow-creatures with a rocket or shell—the rosy fountain into a decanter. Suited as this invention was to bottles of every calibre, it applied with unerring nicety to those devoted to port, as none such were admitted

into the bachelor's cellar, unless they held an actual quart, and bore the crest and initials of their owner.

Excepting the simplest biscuit of the finest flour, the olive or orange dessert was imperatively forbidden; that is to say, upon the high altar devoted to the god of wine. Apart and distinct, in honour of the house, and to pacify the old butler, there was an altar worthy of Flora, and abounding with fruits and preserves in infinite perfection.

This question of dessert had been a contested point between master and man. None can do quite as they like in their own house; the greatest, most probably, the least so. The old butler, with the pride of the family in which he was born, insisted upon the positive necessity of winding up with the dessert; and the lordly old bachelor could only get something like his own way, by dividing the question, and making it a drawn battle.

“If my guests will be such fools as to spoil good wine,” said De la Bere, as the convention was settled, “they shall, at least, have the trouble of a walk for their folly.”

Indeed, from respect to the opinions of the host, this taste of young teeth, and toothless gums, was rarely indulged in by the guests. Sheridan, to be sure, could seldom resist the temptation of eliciting Mr. De la Bere's looks of scornful horror, by swallowing some luscious conserve in the midst of some vintage extraordinary.

"You incorrigible, wicked boy!" exclaimed De la Bere, one day, "will you never learn to drink your wine like a man?"

"I will try," answered Sheridan, helping himself to an extra glass to purify his palate; and, knowing the true history, he added, "Your house, De la Bere, is an earthly Paradise, but so much forbidden fruit is misplaced; do let me ring the bell, and order Jameson to remove it?"

"No, no!" was the reply of mine host, wishing, with human infirmity, to appear strongest where he was weakest; "no, no! I hate to see any man rise from my table, and you see I hold the reins in my own hand," exhibiting a bell-rope, contrived to rise from the floor.

“ True,” said Sheridan; “ but the De la Beres always travel with six, and, they do say, old Jameson guides the leader.”

“ Nonsense! he’s no better than an old woman.”

“ Who plays Mother Eve?” added Sheridan, catching up the idea, and requesting a bumper, to wash down the luscious Paradise crab-apple which he had been tempted to take.

“ Fair play!” cried Tierney, who made the third. “ Remember, you are not the first and only man upon earth, and entitled to have all the fruits of temptation to yourself. I am a veteran in these matters, and ——”

“ Hush!” said Sheridan, “ I wont be countermanded; “ pray keep your rules of three and multiplication for the House of Accounts: I am actually choking.” And, giving two or three of the driest coughs he could command, he continued:— “ It is a fact, my dear Tierney, it is a natural fact, that a hogshead of sugar, the West Indies themselves, can’t make a crab travel straight. It is here now,” pointing to the side of his throat; “ and I doubt, De la Bere, if any thing short of a *magnum*,

from bin No. 1, will be able to wash it down."

"I'll ring the bell for that, with all my heart," said the kind-hearted host.

But, where has the trio led us? To conclude the preparations for the two, we will only add that most patrician luxury, wine-glasses, as thin as the bee's wing, which floated, like the sails of Queen Mab, within the crusted bottle.

CHAPTER V.

GENEROUS OLD PORT — POLITICS AND THE
TRIGGER.

“ The thirsty earth soaks up the rain,
And drinks, and gapes for drink again :
The plants suck in the earth, and are,
By constant drinking, fresh and fair :
The sea itself, which, one would think,
Should have but little need of drink,
Drinks ten thousand rivers up,
So filled, that they o’erflow the cup :
The busy sun — and, one would guess,
By ’s drunken, fiery face no less —
Drinks up the sea, and, when he’s done,
The moon and stars drink up the sun.
Fill up the bowl, then — fill it high —
Fill all the glasses there ; for why
Should ev’ry creature drink but I ?
Why, man of morals, tell me why ?

COWLEY.

IN our slight sketch of the bachelor’s dining-room, two unexpected visitors have made their appearance ; but if they served to fill up the picture, and give life to tables, chairs, and dead

walls, we hope their intrusion will be kindly forgiven.

In this same room, which had so often witnessed the playful humour of poor Sheridan, Mr. De la Bere and Melton de Mowbray had passed an interesting portion of an hour. The dinner had been discussed with becoming, though any thing but solemn silence: one bottle of port had glided imperceptibly away, and a second was passing to the same vanishing point; nay, we know not whether there was not a third in perspective, for the heart of mine host was open.

“And so, my dear boy,” said the old bachelor, using an address towards Mowbray which glowed on his lips, in the warmth of his sunset dreams, “and you really and soberly promise to stand for the borough of Moneydown: let me fill you a bumper, and drink your success.”

“Gently, my dear sir,” cried Mowbray, staying the hand of his host; “if you wish my consent in sober earnest, you must allow me to listen to all your kind wishes, and make a speech in return.”

“There is something in that; but a bumper I’ll have—and here is my toast,” said Mr. De la Bere, lifting his glass without raising a ripple,—“May your hopes and career be bright as the grape; cares and sorrows be left like the crust on the bottle!” and, having drank off the pledge of his prayers, he uttered an earnest “amen!” as he put down his glass, and invoked the blessing of Heaven on the future senator.

Poor Mowbray! motherless, though his mother was on earth; a stranger to all but stern and icy reserve in his father, was touched to the heart by the voice of deep affection. As a son, he took the hand of him who had spoken as a parent, and pressed it to his lips; but the tear which glistened in his eye was the only speech he could make on the occasion. The next moment he strove to rally from a weakness he rarely betrayed, and, feeling something of false shame and pride in the idea of yielding such tribute to one on whom he had no claims of kindred, he said, in his wonted manner, “If you light the torch of ambition,

you must teach me how to bear it with safety, lest I burn my own fingers as well as enlighten the world : you must set me to my task."

"Use your eyes as well as your head, is the best guide for political as well as other wisdom ; a man can't weigh his own worth, unless he puts his neighbour's in the opposite scale : be firm in your principles, stanch to your party, but never be blind to the merits of those who oppose you ; absolute wisdom is a humbug, and truth can only be found by looking to the right and the left."

"What a wise man that squinting fellow, Wilkes, must be," remarked Mowbray, whose mind had scarcely settled down to his lesson.

"Ay, ay," continued Mr. De la Bere, intent upon his propositions, "but it is not every man whose eyes, like rusty weather-cocks on a tower, look all ways at once. With eyes like yours"—and he mechanically paused to look at them—"how like your poor mother's !" came in, in a short parenthesis, without breaking the thread of his discourse,—"you must take the trouble of turning from

one side to another, and avoiding the blindness of party-spirit: read and judge for yourself and your country."

"But Sheridan tells me, he who reads much seldom thinks for himself: I rather incline to his way of thinking; it must save a world of trouble."

"There is truth in his doctrine; for most men read like machines, which get through their work, and that's all; they won't take the trouble to think, and, therefore, take the thoughts of another for granted; whereas, if a man have but the spark of genius within himself, the opinions of others are but the train to kindle his own, and light his search for their truth."

"That accounts for my wanderings, I suppose, when Blinkingsop preaches; his lights make my brain a volcano."

"That is a case apart," said Mr. De la Bere, looking instantly grave; "such eruptions are dangerous when they meet with inflammable matter; religion should never be mingled with politics."

"I feel you are right," answered Mowbray,

submitting to the reproof with good grace ;
“ but is not converse better than reading ? and,
to quote my witty tutor once more, is not
human nature the best book in the world ? I
should learn more and think more in an hour’s
chat with yourself, than in a day devoted to
quartos.”

“ I never taught you to flatter,” replied
De la Bere, with his usual bluntness of manner,
yet, probably, not quite insensible to the com-
pliment : “ but, to your question. If we could
strike off the heads of the learned, multiply
the impressions, and make them speak like
oracles when we wished to consult them, I
might grant your position ; but this cannot be.
The written thoughts of a man are always
within our reach. The same holds good with
the study of mankind : I grant it is a capital
book ; but we must take the pages as they fall
in our way, instead of turning at once to the
one we may wish to consult.”

“ But,” asked Mowbray, “ whom can we
trust or believe, when we see and know that
self has inspired the pen ?”

“ You need do neither implicitly, and yet

gather wisdom ; intellect goes best with a spur. If Sawdust writes for a place, Empty pits for a bishopric, A, B, C, for their bread, be assured they will each do their best. They will put forth their strength to shew the best of their case, and give us the best standard to measure our own."

" But, their violence, their venom, their efforts to mislead —"

" Bad, unchristianlike, I grant, most especially in the ministers of peace and goodwill ; but there is this advantage, that their violence betrays their design, and puts our judgment on its guard : be it anarchy, or self-aggrandisement, veiled in the garb of patriotism, virtue, or religion, the cloven foot appears ; be the dress ever so tidy at starting, such is their eagerness in ascending the ladder, so vicious their fling out in attempting to kick down their rivals, that the hoof is as distinctly visible as if they wore petticoats shorter than those of a Swiss peasant-girl."

" What pretty legs and beautiful ankles they have !" exclaimed Mowbray, proving how

rapidly one thought can kindle the train of another.

Mr. De la Bere stared, then smiled, and maliciously asked of his guest, "if he were alluding to the bench of bishops, or the dancers at the Opera House?"

Mowbray cast his eye on a magnificent or-molu clock, and then endeavoured to prove his attention to the subject by attacking the newspapers.

"What weakness and folly," he said, "to be cajoled by men who don't care a jot for one side or the other, and who write for whichever pays best."

"They, too, have their uses in spite of their dross; the mass of mankind are too idle to think for themselves, and, on passing events, it is here that we find all that talent can say on two sides of a question. Golden spur is at work, we allow; but if we get the best and worst of an argument in the best and most powerful form, the purest of patriots may learn without being swayed. That man is a fool who forgets that papers are private pro-

perty as much as a brewery, fishery, or decoy pond: the partners, if wise, employ the best hands they can find. Call, if you will, the newspaper-writers a flock of decoy birds, allow they are fed for their wits, and rewarded for entrapping their own species, what of this, if we know that it is so? If not on our guard, the fault is our own, and if some silly quackers are changed into wild geese, faith! I laugh outright while these clever decoyers laugh in their sleeve, feed with new appetite and plume their quills for another good catch."

"I hate all decoys," said Mowbray, making a second slight abberation; "they are only fit for the sluggard, and death to the sportsman who has the spirit to work for himself."

"So far I agree; I like a man to think and act for himself; but, as I told you before, the mind, like our guns, needs a spark to make it go off, and then the fault is with us if we don't keep it straight."

Mowbray perceived that Mr. De la Bere, with the spirit of an old sportsman, had taken up his idea somewhat more literally than he had ventured to expect: upon the strength of

this, he expressed a hope that he allowed no decoy ponds on his estate.

“Not I, by my soul!” exclaimed the senator, changed at once to the country squire: “fill your glass, my dear fellow, and let us drink ‘the trigger in a bumper.’ A decoy pond, forsooth! I have a small bit of water, which covers some thirty acres or more, studded with islands, and bordered with creeks, which I call my preserve. Come and spend the Christmas with me, and you shall bang away when you will: but this is tame work compared to the moors and morasses.”

“I quite agree with you,” replied Mowbray, his eyes flashing fire with the thoughts of the sport. “There is something particularly fine in bringing down a wild-duck; and the scenery—what melancholy grandeur! what wild and solitary beauty! what glories of the setting year! what mosses! the heather and the fern; the solemn stillness of night-fall!”

“And,” added the old sportsman, putting in a few touches of his pencil, “the wild-duck’s whistling wing, which flits unseen, like an arrow by night; and the curlew, calling from

its sea of sands ; and the cry of the bittern, and the flight of the heron.”

“ Which,” added Mowbray, to the poet’s climax, as he caught up the scent with the deep burst of a blood-hound, “ sails in the gloom, like the genius of night ; and the mournful gusts of the sighing rush, when the reeds ‘ are shaken by the wind ! ’ and the moon which awakes with the dirge of the rising tide, and guides our steps to the blazing hearth which awaits our return.”

“ D — it, my boy, here is the trigger again ! ” exclaimed the old sportsman, with the warmth of enthusiasm ; and, having filled a bumper for himself and his guest, he laid his hand on his shoulder, and added, “ Melton, you have taught me two things to day ; if your heart be cold and hard to the world, it can be changed, like ice, to a tear by the warmth of a friend ; and I find that the fop of St. James’s is a poet.”

“ Not I, upon my word,” said Mowbray, who was too constitutionally idle to string a couplet together ; “ not I ; excepting the muses

I was compelled to make love to at Eton, I never rhymed in my life."

"Don't be alarmed; the spirit is in you, and I love you the better. Few men shoot with their eyes open—you do; pursue the same plan with your politics, and you may live to serve or save your country. Look at yonder books," said Mr. De la Bere, pointing to a range of thin volumes of political pamphlets, essays, and speeches.

Mowbray turned "eyes right," and obeyed.

"You see how they support one another?"

"I do; but that," said Mowbray, with his erratic propensity, "is more than they do out of doors."

"Or in 'the House,' either," added Mr. De la Bere, who knew how to mingle the salt of a joke when cramming his bird; "but, as they are, they serve to illustrate the position of man,—neither can stand alone: man, self-sufficient, divinely and morally must fall. As, in a heavenly point of view, he must be born again, and feel that his strength is but the weakness of a child; so, morally speaking, he must gain

strength by feeling the want of it, and gather wisdom from friend and foe ; but," he continued, pronouncing the word with emphasis, and rising from his chair to fetch some books from his classic shelves, "but," he repeated, as he held up a volume of Montesquieu's *Esprit des Loix*, "there are brighter, purer, sources of knowledge in which we can bathe the soul, and cleanse it from the taint of muddier pools, or the blood-stained fountains of human passions. There are men who have studied mankind for the good of all ; who have risen like a lighthouse from the deep to warn, to guide, and save, alike the wanderers of every nation. These Christian philosophers——"

"Shall I fill your glass?" inquired Mowbray, perceiving his host was suffering from a slight dryness of throat.

The glass was extended while two or three hemming coughs seemed to imply the wisdom of the prescription. Having drank off the remedy, and wrecked the thin stem of his glass against one of the light-houses he had placed on the table, he merely remarked, "Never mind, my dear Melton, the vessel was empty.

And," he continued, " these Christian philosophers, with the heart of the gentle Howard, have looked on creation as the sheep of one fold; and, like the good shepherd, have laboured for the benefit of all."

" How these men must have laughed to scorn the imaginary bounds which tyrants affix to their kingdoms, and shift as a chain for the measurement of land," said Mowbray, won by the fervour which lit the expression of his host.

" Rather say, how their hearts must have bled for the lamb that was bound and given to slaughter, while they prayed in pity for the frailty and littleness of kings. Such gentle spirits could have laughed no man to scorn; for, had they not felt the infirmity of all, they could not have written for the good of all: and yet I doubt if one in fifty of our senators have read the volume I hold in my hand."

" Too indolent, probably," said Mowbray, who felt that he was expected to say something.

" No; for two much worse reasons—ignorance and prejudice. They could not, if they

would ; they would not, if they could—because it is written by a Frenchman.”

Mowbray was silent ; for, waving national antipathy, he doubted his own powers of perusal, though he had learned French for seven years—at least his father had paid for that period the old Frenchman, who held one of those sinecures which are, or were, in the gift of our public schools.

“ Fox,” continued the Mentor, after waiting in vain for some note of admiration, “ would not have been the man he is with the mere random reading of mankind ; the fixed stars must be the pilot’s guide, though the bright and passing meteor may chance to shew the boiling surf. In reading the world, we may open the black pages of vice, ingratitude, and misery ; the characters may be written in blood, and the student’s heart be hardened until he doubt if there be good in man, or wisdom in virtue. It is not from such sources alone that we acquire that love which should be the aim of every government—the happiness of all ; it must be by the aid of lights quenchless as these,” pointing to the books, “ that we

see the rocks on which statesmen are prone to be lost; and be assured it was a volume of purer light which guided these philosophers, and shed the rays of Christianity on their enlightened pages: it is by works such as I hold in my hand, by the spirit of that sacred volume which says, ‘Wo unto him who buildeth a city in blood,’ that the mind of Fox has outstepped the age in which he lives, and spoken in the spirit of prophecy.”

Once more the listener had been won by the warmth which his host displayed when the theme was mingled with the name of the friend and man whom he idolised, and Mowbray begged to be informed in what point of view Fox appeared as a prophet.

“Has he not told us,” asked Mr. De la Bere, with the glow of a philanthropist, “that the day shall come when France and England shall be as brothers? Has he not burst the shackles of prejudice, and risen like a giant with strength renewed from the cradle of unsparing enmity in which we have all been nursed? Is not ‘peace for ever on his tongue?’ And does he not yearn to see nation in har-

mony with nation, and the blood-stained fetters of the conqueror changed to the bonds of peace?"

Mr. De la Bere had laid down the volume of Montesquieu, and was, probably, on the point of displaying some of the lights of his own country, when a carriage rattled up to the house: a peal, more than usually loud, thundered at the door; it opened, and Stentorian lungs announced, "*Di carridge ove Mistere Melton de Mowbray:*" immediately afterwards the old butler entered the dining-room, and said, with a respectful bow, "Your carriage, sir."

"We scarcely needed the second edition," said Mr. De la Bere. "Do you always direct your valet to carry a speaking-trumpet?"

"Oh, no!" answered Mowbray, his gravity upset by the execution of his orders, and his spirits mounting at the thoughts of the opera-box. "When I take the lead in the house, I shall appoint my own speaker, rise above prejudice, and shew the world each man is my brother: that fellow is in training."

"You must go into training yourself, if

you ever wish to be great; and be modest enough to think you cannot be the Premier while Fox is alive."

"If I don't," said the incorrigible Mowbray, "it will be the first time I ever followed a fox without taking the lead."

Mr. De la Bere shook his head, and felt very much like a man, who, having toiled far up a steep, suddenly loses his footing and slips back to the point whence he started.

"Will you never learn to be grave?" he said, half in anger, half in sorrow: "I fear nothing but death's door or misfortune will tame you to reason—these volumes——"

"In mercy forbear for the present," cried Mowbray. "More learning would make me stagger like a drunkard; '*l'esprit des loix*' has already got into my head."

"I wish it had," said Mr. De la Bere, with a sigh; then, relinquishing his efforts to instruct, he added, "well, at least stay and help me to finish the bottle."

"To support your glass, which can't stand alone?"

"Nonsense!"

“ Only a leaf out of your own book.”

“ Sit down, it is but eight.”

“ But, consider, my kind sir, the calls on my time; there is the call for my beggar-man, the call of the House, the Speaker’s call, and, last, not least, the calls of my toilet.”

“ Do cease to be such a puppy!”

“ *Cela me convient à mon âge*: I promise to grow great in time, and be as solemn as an oversized poodle dog. For the present, adieu.”

“ What! not fill a glass to the health of fair Helen?” asked the host, slyly pointing to himself, and determined his pupil should not fly to “metal more attractive,” without feeling a shaft of his ridicule.

“ I don’t understand you,” said Mowbray, overpowering his host with adieus, and attempting his escape.

“ Well, well,” said the persecuting Mentor, following his steps; “just look at this portrait, this veritable *esprit d’amour*, and you shall be free to depart.” And while he held him by the arm, he opened a Homer finely

illustrated ; and, turning to the third book, began, “ τοῦ δ’ Ἑλλην.”

“ I don’t understand Greek,” cried Mowbray, breaking away.

“ Well, then, take Pope’s version :

‘ Meantime, the brightest of the female kind,
The matchless Helen, o’er the *box* reclined.’ ”

In vain did Mowbray try to drown the orator with cries of “ No popery ! ” and escape from the lines. The doors, each formed in an open bookcase, and faced with the imitation of such works as the owner’s humours suggested, gave to the room the appearance of an enclosure. Poor Mowbray, in his eagerness, missed the door leading to the hall, and not only heard the quotations to an end, but had to request his tormentor to shew him how to get out of his clutches.

“ Ha ! ha ! ” said the senator, laughing at his victim, while he took him affectionately by the hand ; “ you see, after all, my dear boy, you must fight your way through my

books, and take me for your guide, if you hope to get on. How like to his beautiful mother!" ejaculated the old bachelor, when the door had closed upon the mercurial run-away.

At this moment Jameson entered by another door, and having approached unheard, startled the dreamer, by asking if he should order the carriage for the opera.

"No--yes--no; say that I am engaged," was the unconnected reply. The old butler understood the nature of the engagement, bowed, and returned in silence.

The bachelor, left to himself, took a few turns, and then resumed his chair. As he gazed on the seat recently occupied by one who so strongly recalled the image he cherished in its pristine purity, "May Heaven forgive her, and spare the innocent! may the sins of ——" escaped from his lips, when he paused to fill the stemless glass which had been turned down like a hand-bell. The sentence he had begun was left unfinished, and changed to a fervent "God bless him!" while he closed the lips by a final bumper of generous port.

As he withdrew the empty glass, he decided within himself that after that toast no other should profane the relic. Having, half unconsciously, watched the rich and rosy dew which trickled down the glass, and formed one ruby drop at the bottom, he raised the crystal fragment against "the spirit of the laws," and with gentle force shattered the glass to a thousand pieces.

CHAPTER VI.

THE OPERA HOUSE.

Re Chambers.

“ Though blind, how beautiful is justice ! ”

“ *Lord Chan.*—Silence ! the court awards a shell to each.

(Cries of, ‘ Give us the oyster ! where is the substance,
my lord ? ’ from both sides of the house.)

L. C.—Silence ! or be committed for contempt of court.

Mercy is blended with our just decree.

To terminate this suit, we have ourselves

Devoured the oyster.

Suitors (in a whisper)—My lord, we both must starve.

Counsel—Then a shell is all you will require :

That you have got.”

From an old Farce, styled “ Chancery.”

“ *VAS I spoke loud enough, sare ?* ” inquired
François the valet, as he assisted Melton
de Mowbray into his carriage.

“ Quite.”

“ *And de litel nock, sare?* ”

“ Good.”

Upon which the steps were folded, and the door shut, with the silent rapidity of lightning. Mowbray threw himself back in the corner, and laughed merrily to himself at the *ruse de guerre* which had enabled him to escape from the bachelor's hospitable roof; where, especially after dinner, carriages were rarely announced until the servants had finished a tankard of ale with a sop of toast, and discussed a dish of politics.

As the master was thus complimenting his own ingenuity, the valet was shrugging up his shoulders, and trying to look the image of sorrow and remorse; while the porter pointed to the knocker which had broken his nap, and (as he swore with an oath) cracked an oak panel three inches thick.

The coachman, however, had received his word “ Home!” His elbows were squared; his whip fell with the lightness of a feather on the mettled steeds; and, in an instant, his white curled wig and three-corner hat cut through the air like the figure-head of a man-

of-war. François, quickly relieved from the necessity of playing the penitent, was at liberty to enjoy a laugh, and think, with pride, on his masterly style of closing a carriage.

“ *Ah ! voilà,*” he said, practising English and soliloquising at once ; “ *dat is de vay ; not ferme up mi lor, comme une bête, as if ever he valked in di agony-coach, or drived di—di—di—théâtre vid four horse ;*” that is, to interpret François’ English, ever rode in a *Hackney* or *stage-coach*.

Such self-satisfied meditations were shortly terminated by the carriage stopping in Arlington Street, St. James’s, and giving Monsieur François the opportunity of shewing his skill in opening a door, and letting down steps.

As, in those days, boots and black stocks were quite inadmissible to evening society, while Mr. Mowbray is completing the passport of a gentleman’s dress, we will amuse ourselves by surveying that ill-fated house devoted to the Italian opera.

Little inward change has taken place from the date at which we are writing, if we except an accumulation of dirt, decay, and wretched-

ness; being a few of the many quarterings in my lord chancellor's seal, which, alas! has been so long affixed to that disputed property.

If, in a theatre so lavishly supported by the wealth and aristocracy of England, that one box for two nights in the few weeks of a season, equals in value the income of a good living; or, in other words, the yearly means of supporting a family: if a property so upheld cannot form one exception to the withering gripe of a chancery suit, how evil, mischievous, and fatal, must be that system which preys, like the dry rot, slowly, but surely, on all property shut up within its stagnant courts?

We trust that our readers — if a woman, there cannot be a doubt — respect, as we do, a well-dressed man; attention to this point is at all ages desirable. The want of it may be forgiven in the cloistered sage; but, in the world, in the perfect gentleman, in the young more especially, it is a *sine quâ non*. We, therefore, venture to hope that the reader will neither chafe nor frown if we allow Mr. Mow-

bray a becoming time for “the calls of his toilet;” nor even think the delay unwisely filled up, by accompanying us while we glance at the instance of abuse which the Italian Opera House presents to our eyes.

The survey of our mind’s eye shall be rapid: if, however, there be any fair lady dying to rejoin our hero, she may form a glorious exception, and get out of chancery by a hop, skip, and jump, over a few pages.

In the original conception of the lord high chancellor of England, or rather of the office which he fills, there is something particularly wise, solemn, and imposing—the robes and long-flowing wig may help the imagination; but, setting these aside, and looking on the thin and silvered hairs of age—on the man raised to the highest station for wisdom, experience, talents, and integrity; beholding one who unites the character of him who helpeth them to right that suffer wrong, and that which comes still nearer to the heart, of a father to the fatherless, the protector and guardian of the orphan’s right; seeing this,

and knowing that the great and upright judge has but the wish to deal justice to all, how can we do otherwise than sigh for those reforms which might enable the means to keep pace with the wishes, and regret, deeply regret, those glaring instances of criminal idiocy which intrude upon our observation!

“ *Mais, dites-moi, mon ami, qu'est que c'est donc, ce grand hôtel là qui va tomber en ruine?* ” asked an intelligent foreigner to whom we were lionising our capital, and who was struck by the sight of a house looking doubly shattered, neglected, and defiled, by the contrast with its well-conditioned neighbours.

“ It is in chancery,” we replied, with a sort of national blush, and endeavouring to turn his attention to the splendid and *bien tenues* houses on the opposite side of the square.

“ *Mais voilà encore un autre bâtiment semblable à celui que je viens de remarquer, c'est bien extraordinaire! comme c'est drôle 'tale quale originale!'* ” exclaimed our Frenchman, closing his signs of wonder with the scrap of Italian,

as, in succession, we passed houses which even a foreigner, once informed, detected at a glance as being *in chancery*.

Our friend, a marquess of the old school, and with all the high breeding which still lingers in the Faubourg St. Germain, had great difficulty in repressing a laugh. In the corner of the mouth and eyes there was a gathering storm of laughter; and it was probably the wish to let it burst with impunity, that he gravely inquired, pointing to the bills which were placarded to the upper story,

“ *Est-ce que milor chancelier fait toutes ses reparations avec le papier et la colle de farine? Cela n’empêche pas les murs de tomber?* ”

“ *Plait-il?* ” we replied, at a loss for an answer, which must have compromised the sagacity of the lord high chancellor.

The question was repeated, but with a gravity so irresistibly ludicrous, that we could not refrain from laughter, in which, *sans doute, par politesse*, our friend, the marquess,

joined. When we had both recovered, we—that is, the lioniser—said—

“ But monsieur le marquis reads English ? ”

The hands were lifted, the head shaken, and the plea of near sight given.

“ But look,” we continued, pointing to some red letters at least two feet long, and setting forth something of “ Snipsum and Co. . . . A New Suit . . . Established upwards of a Century ; ” “ Reduced Fares ! ” — These puffs were partly hidden by some notice “ Pursuant to a decree of the High Court of Chancery.” Rather *mal à propos* to our wishes, the particulars of this sale were hid by one of Wombwell’s long bills, and the words, “ Sloth — Torpedo — Shark — with Birds from the Silly Islands — Animals bought, sold, exchanged, and tamed,” &c. &c. were blazoned and pasted, as if the lord chancellor had set forth the contents of his menagerie, amidst the crumbling ruins of the upper stories. “ Surely, monsieur knows the meaning of that ? ”

“ *Ma foi ! Je n’en sais rien,* ” was the first

reply, when, chancing to find his spectacles, he looked again at the mansion *en papillote*, then at us ; and, with malicious gravity, said :
“ *Ah ! ah ! Je vois bien, je comprend parfaitement bien, et je trouve qu’il y a beaucoup— beaucoup de sagesse dans cette manière de proceder ; c’est ainsi que les décrets de la chancellerie sont toujours affichés ?*”

“ *Vous avez raison,*” we answered, and, as a sort of *pis aller*, sought refuge by requesting the marquess to direct his eyes to the national palace, which, strange to say, and in spite of his glasses, he had most unaccountably approached without dreaming of the fact.

We pass the surprise and observations of our friend, when enlightened on this point, and ask, why we who boast—and, for the most part, with reason — of our laws and constitutions, can thus herald our failings and follies to the world, instead of ceasing to violate common sense and the sense of justice ?

If property be worth disputing, it is worth preserving. If, in the end, justice decrees the property disputed to him whose claims are just, it is an act of gross injustice to restore a

mass of ruins, acres overrun with the tare, the thistle, and bramble, parks pillaged with impunity for years, to him who is too often beggared and houseless by the machinations of a villain cloaked in the chicanery of law.

Can any advocate for things as they are—can any barrister in the courts of chancery be so bigoted, so senseless, as to defend such egregious folly, such palpable injustice? Will any one but an idiot say that such state of things is unavoidable? that the chancellor has no power to apply a remedy? We reply, that his power is all but absolute in matters connected with his court, and that the remedy is within itself. Why is not the property let on condition of keeping it in repair? Let the rent be moderate; let it be nothing. Better this than let the abode of man become a roofless ruin, and the fruitful acres be changed to a barren wilderness!

It is said of a celebrated barrister, that, wishing to form a correct opinion on some matter touching his own affairs, he had the case regularly drawn up, and placed, amidst others, with the usual fee, to stimulate his

attention. So much for the force of habit; and in proof that lawyers will not, cannot, work for nothing. How is it, then, that for once they are blind to their own interests; that they do not suggest a reform which would add to the means of paying the suit they live upon? How much of thousands paid into court is afterwards extracted and put into their pockets? Why is not this suggested by the learned brothers to Lord Brougham, or any future Brougham which may attempt to cleanse the Augæan stable? Better, far better that it should be thus, if, *at last*, the poor suitor finds a house over his head.

“*Mais revenons à nos moutons,*” as the marquess said, after looking in vain for the king’s palace as we descended St. James’s Street, adding, at the time, “*Est-ce que monsieur a jamais vu les châteaux royaux de France? celui de Versailles, par exemple?*”

But, to return. We have said that even the Opera House, though forming a wise exception in being let, rather than suffer the aristocratic public to be shorn of their amuse-

ments, could not escape that seal of misery which the hand of chancery sets upon all it touches. No improvements, little alteration, has taken place from the state at which we write, if we except the addition of stalls, given, as we are told, out of compliment to the high church, and to let the radical commoners see and feel what comfortable things they are. With this exception, the interior can be easily dismissed. Fops' Alley was then as now. Fops, or whatever title fashion may confer, abounded then as they have done since, and, doubtless, ever will. The aged cognoscenti, though unstalled, feasted in the front ranks; and, with the gravity of mandarins, nodded time and approbation. The young cursed the music, and looked with impatience for "invisible petticoats." In the boxes, as now, the everlasting tree of life was seen, like that of the orange in all the stages of mortality. There was beauty in the bud, like hope in its virgin innocence; there were buds expanding into blossom, fragrant with promise; there was beauty in its glorious zenith, and beauty, alas! waning, withering,

and dropping off; there was fruit gathered and preserved, sweet, smiling, and tempting; and fruit hanging on hand, neglected, sour, bitter, and repelling.

As to the stage, it had, as now, its night-ingales of song — those gentle birds of passage, which come and go, sing for their season (at the longest, short), then pass away, and are seen no more. But a little while since we listened to the notes of Mara; she passed, and Catalani sought our shores. But yesterday was Pasta; to-day is Malibran; and, ere the ink is dry, with which we chronicled that sweet enchantress, the arrow of death has pierced her warbling throat; and we write — she was, and is no more.

As to the gods of the dance, have we not had generations of the immortal Vestris, goddesses and sylphs, without end, down to Taglioni, who cleaves the air like a winged zephyr, and moves with the silence of a ray of light. And as it has been it will be — not Chancery itself will change this; to-morrow will have its supply, and so will the day after, and so will succeeding years, as long as Mr. Bull, that

great and extravagant spendthrift, baits his trap with crumbs of gold, and catches himself in his own snares.

So much for the interior, its splendour, and talent of the living, its filthy hangings, and law-struck misery of still life ; but, for the exterior, great is the change thereof. We remember a simple story, which, alas ! for the dignity of man, amused us more in our childhood than the wittiest and most learned can ever do again, a simple story of a little woman, whose name was “ Stout,” and a certain malicious cobbler, who “ cut her petticoats all round about.” How shall we proceed ? In these days of high morality, that is, when the ever-feasting rich may banquet on the Sabbath, and the poor man is forbidden to bake his Sunday dinner ; when the rich drink wine, and commend water ; when bishops ride to church, and preach pedestrianism ; when innocent recreations are forbidden, and gin palaces patronised by the revenue they yield, when —. But, really, there is no end to the morality of the age, and the question is, how to proceed with our story ? for, although the opera dancer,

inflated by a *pirouette*, and with less than a fig-leaf for a petticoat, calls for no blush in the high-bred virgin, surrounded by the lords of creation; yet we, in our solitude, tremble, lest some straight-laced eye may affect to be shocked, when we tell how this little woman, weary with walking to market and selling her eggs, fell sound asleep by the way side, and how the naughty cobbler cut “her petticoats so high above the knee,” that when the poor woman awoke with cold, she could see no vestige of those modest and comfortable casings; an awful predicament, we allow, for her, as well as for us. But here, in order to keep the reader’s imagination within just bounds, we beg to suggest, that she was “a dumpy woman,” and, doubtless, like most market women, too short-necked and fat to see the tips of her own toes, either walking or standing. In such case, let it be remembered, that the precise length of the remnants might be beyond her powers of vision, and yet pretty decentish in the eyes of others.

Having, like the man with his donkey, attempted to please every one, and wandered

sadly from the point, out of pure respect to the age, we now hasten to apply the simile of this poor little woman to the Opera House.

If she, poor soul! upon awaking, began to quiver, to shake, and sing out, “This can’t be I;” such, we are convinced, will be the burden of the Opera House, when roused from its nap in Chancery, it looks upon the magic changes of the Cobbler Nash.

Beyond the wonderment, the quivering, and shaking, the similitude is varied according to our moral improvement. The architectural cobbler has kept more truly to his own proper calling, and patched and added to the dress, instead of diminishing; the dirty old red cloak has been covered by a staid and stone-coloured coat of Roman plaster; trimmings, binding, ornaments, and heel-pieces, have been attached, and the crumbling, unsightly mass, which seemed as if tottering to earth, is girt by iron columns, which run round its base like a centipede — a very pauper, clothed in ermine!

But, adieu to a theme so melancholy! — adieu to the jibes of lawyers, who have made a mock word of misfortune, and lived in “*Chan-*

cery Chambers" till they have amassed thousands upon thousands! — adieu to the dark chronicles of bankruptcy lessees! It is a twice-told, never-varying tale; the seal of Chancery is the ban of misery; be it affixed where it will, nothing can thrive, nothing get on, but the limbs of law!

To thoughts like these, adieu! The carriage is at the door, Melton de Mowbray on the stairs, François at his post. "*À l'Opera?*" inquired the valet. "Yes," was the reply; "but, call first at Freestone House: I promised to pick up Mr. Boltville."

"*Pauvre miserable! ven vas he tomble, I vonder,*" said François to himself, as he closed the carriage door. The next moment he leaned over the back of the carriage, and gave his orders to the coachman, by shouting, "*To de ouse of de upper air.* Mais monsieur,*" he added to his translation into English, "*you must stoop in de vay to pick up Mistere Bolt-de-ville.*"

* Opera House.

CHAPTER VII.

DETERMINATION, DOUBT, AND PUNISHMENT.

“Doubt's the worst tyrant of a generous mind.”

BEHN.

“You are before your time, for a wonder!” said the good-tempered, breathless Boltville, as he bundled into the carriage.

“I hate punctuality, and love variety. But, what is that gash in your hand?” asked Mowbray, pointing to a cheap kid glove, which had burst its cerements.

“It is only my rascally glover; bad leather, bad sewing, and ——”

“Bad pay,” added Mowbray, seeing his friend at a loss for a third excuse. “But, my dear fellow,” he continued, “this will never do: your cousin, Lady Selina, will faint.”

“Why?”

“Nothing less, if she sees one rosy fist gaping like the crack of a ripe pomegranate,

and another holding a glove you dare not draw on."

"Has François put your glove-box in the carriage?" asked Boltville, whose sense of delicacy in borrowing had long since been torpified.

"Why ask the question? How can a man live through the opera, and look like a gentleman, with one pair of gloves?" replied Mowbray, who would not immediately take the hint.

"It is a ruinously dirty place, but I always find one pair enough."

"Or, occasionally make shift with half?" asked Mowbray, pointing to the one entire glove, which was kept for show.

The joke was taken in good part; and Boltville, availing himself of the opening it afforded, said, "Yes, sometimes, any thing does for a benefit night. For this evening, perhaps, you could lend me a pair?"

"Delighted!" cried Mowbray; and, taking an Indian sandal-wood box from a side-pocket, he presented a half-dozen packet to his friend; and added, "if you don't use them all at once,

put the rest in your pocket—they won't spoil the cut of your coat."

Boltville obeyed, and subtracting one from six, he pocketed the remainder, and then held up a pair of such delicate proportions, that he doubted their fitness for his podgy fist.

"*Soyez tranquille*," cried Mowbray, "as the black-eyed brunette said to me; or, in the words of her English husband, 'not fit, sir! they'll give like a watch-spring, and fit from a fawn's foot to a leg of mutton.'"

The attempt was made, the gloves drawn on; and, if the powers of elasticity were wound to the utmost, they were, like the wearer, too good-tempered to split upon trifles.

"We meet in the press-room," said Mowbray, as they were entering the house, gently intimating that there they must part; and, as he gave to François a cloak, lined with sable, which the vigilant valet, warned by a few thunder-drops, had provided for his master, he added, in a careless manner, "Adieu! for the present. You see, Boltville, though I do buy my clothes second-hand, as the Jew's eye of your friend detected, their sentence ends

there: I never allow them to be hung a second time."

"How so?"

"Oh, merely, that having touched our royal person, they are rendered whole, and freed from further evil. It is only men, like yourself and the marquess, who practise the vulgarity of new clothes, and allow them to be hung, drawn, and quartered, in a hole like an old clothes'-shop, night after night."

"There is your ticket, sir," said the man, who had taken Mr. Boltville's cloak, and presented a dirty torn bit of card-paper, marked 208.

"Horrible! most horrible!" cried Mowbray, shrinking back, as his friend took the ticket between the thumb and finger of the exquisite kids. "What profanation! Throw them away, or," with a whisper, "give them to the Scotch laird on your right. As to your cloak, it is well we don't meet for a month; there needs that time for quarantine, after mixing with two hundred and seven of the off-casts of society."

“ You’ll give me a seat home?” asked Boltville, as Mowbray was departing.

“ You—with pleasure, but no admittance for the cloak; that must ride outside. Till twelve, adieu! We part in the hanging shop, and meet in the press-room. Devilish funny! Good bye, my dear fellow.”

“ But, the cloak?” asked Boltville, with a look of entreaty, feeling nervous about a new velvet collar which had been attached that morning, and dreading his friend’s eccentric determination, “ let me plead for the cloak?”

“ Plead for the wretch that is hanging!—you might as well ask a reprieve for the dead. Unbutton me, I pray,” said Mowbray, removing his friend’s hand from a button, which he held like a nervous old gentleman.

“ I see you are not in earnest,” said Boltville, making one more effort.

“ Always, where my character’s concerned,” answered Mowbray, gravely; and, pointing to the cloak-room, boxed up like a cash-taker’s office at the play-house, he added, “ in yonder den your cloak may gather strange company,

and I have a horror of little ones. Half a one seen in a bachelor's carriage would ruin his reputation for ever. It may not be. Adieu!" And, waving his hand, he sought for solitude in the dense and loitering stream of Fops' Alley.

Where shall we look for truth in man? In the depths of the human heart. If so, if these be the wells in which fame has deposited this precious jewel, verily they must have been formed by Artesian artists, so deep, so narrow in the bore, that even when a man looks into his own heart, rarely can he see the truth.

Mowbray, apparently self-possessed, happy, and heedless, while idly jesting his friend upon his hand, his glove, or cloak, was but cloaking the intensity of deeper thoughts, seeking time to probe his feelings, and decide his wavering intentions. He wished to be alone, and fled from one to the crowd, which would leave him to himself.

While he was threading his way to a position which would command most parts of the house, and be opposite to that which con-

tained the source of all his present reflections, he nodded mechanically to one, said "How do?" to another; and, with a cocked hat in one hand, and an opera-glass in the other, pondered in secret.

From the time that Lady Helen Fawndove had passed Brookes's Club-house, and pointed with such playful grace to the box, her image had haunted his mind. Neither Mr. De la Bere's wisdom, his dishes, or good wine, could lay that spirit, which led his thoughts from the spirit of the laws to that burst of poetical feeling, which had not only surprised himself, but, striking a chord in unison, had weaned the Mentor from his task. He had but one intention — to go direct to the Marquess of Blankisle's box, and read at once, if it might be, those beautiful eyes, which had spoken so sweetly in the morning.

But, arrived within a little space of her who had thus possessed his soul, he paused upon the threshold. If possession begets indifference, so the also imagined certainty of possessing, awakens the shadow of paralysis.

It soon passes ; for the boldest speculator is speedily taught, that no earthly event is certain in perspective.

It will not be wondered if Mowbray's intentions were thus arrested for the moment. If one, worshipped by mammas, idolised by their daughters—if he, the spoiled, but gifted child of fortune, fashion, intellect, and person, questioned for an instant an invitation which bespoke a preference, a something like advance, it was but an instant ; and bitterly he atoned for thus perturbing the buoyancy of an innocent heart and guileless ready wit, which spoke a kindly welcome through the trammels of the world's decorum.

Woman, beware ! you cannot be too cautious against the caprice and injustice of man ! and it is not always that he is so speedily repentant, and punished, as our hero.

Mowbray's momentary question was followed by a chaos of darker doubts. “ It cannot be ! What right have I ? Who yet has read her rightly ? Have not the highest bent in vain to the fascination of her eyes ? And if I too ———. Oh, my mother ! my erring, yet

lamented parent, who shall wash out the stain of thy guilt from your wretched and deserted son?"

Such were the thoughts, long as they seem when written, which shot, like lightning, through him who passed for the happy, heartless, votary of fashion.

The sitting of Parliament had prolonged the London season, and the house was thronged. With few exceptions, every box, or, as Hajji Baba expresses himself, "every cell of the honeycomb" was filled. In some were seen the queen bees, conspicuously grand; in others retired; while the young ones, with their honied lips, occupied the front ranks, and listened somewhat less to the music of the stage than the buzzing of attendant drones.

There was one, however, amidst the few exceptions, which gave Mowbray further time for reflection — the Marquess of Blankisle's box was empty. With the reaction of the human heart, Mowbray felt as if the house was deserted; and the few empty boxes stood so glaringly prominent, were so magnified, or rather multiplied, by the eyes which were fixed

on vacuum, that in the necessity of saying something to one who bored him with his critical ecstasies of, “How delicious!—exquisite!—oh, how ravishing!—ah, a something false there!—beautiful, but false, was it not?”

“False as hell!” said Mowbray, confounding the sensitive amateur with a quotation so stern, and perplexing him still more by asking, “how it were possible to sing to an empty house?”

The critic looked first at Mowbray, then at the house, and then—like a fool—he dreaded Mowbray’s turn for satire; and though he had courted his notice, he suspected some intent to quiz in the mysterious replies. Having, however, counted every empty box some two or three times, he assured Mowbray there were but seven unoccupied—“in the pit circle, none; in the front tier above, but one; in the second ——”

“Black-balls!” said Mowbray, cutting short the calculations of him who had just been rejected at Brookes’s, “are always more palpable than others. I dined with De la Bere to-day, and, doubtless, see double. Do

you always count upon coming in? Never mistaken in your reckonings?"

"Can't be to-night," said the rejected of Brookes's, glad to forget the past; "one in the first tier; three in the second—no, that's wrong, I must begin again; the first tier is filled."

"It was so;" and had the calculations of the amateur exceeded Napier's in length and correctness, they would have been lost to Mowbray. The Marchioness of Blankisle and her daughter had entered; Lady Helen Fawndove, with a grace peculiarly her own, had relieved her fairy form from some scarfs and trifles light as zephyrs; she sat in front of the honied cell; all around had borrowed of her sweetness—the scene was changed. Mowbray saw but her; yet, the desert had passed—the house was full.

CHAPTER VIII.

FOPS' ALLEY.

"Slander, the worst of poisons, ever finds
An easy entrance in ignoble minds."

HARVEY.

THE beauty of Lady Helen Fawndove may be imagined, it cannot be written : we have made the attempt, and failed ; we have known a hand, far, far more gifted than our own, attempt and fail ; we have listened to the melody of his voice, hung upon his words of impassioned eloquence, drank the language of a heart which had worshipped her as the loveliest of created things, yet felt it was a failure.

That hand is in the grave ! that heart, oh ! mockery of wo, of life, of man ! — that heart which beat but yesterday in the form of one

great and godlike in mind, which sent forth its stream of life, giving and receiving like the everlasting ocean, now severed from the body, moulders into dust within the mourner's urn : and shall we, who survive, attempt where the mighty failed? The tear which has fallen for the dead, and effaced the last words we had written, warns us to desist ; once, in the hey-day of youth, our feebler efforts failed like those of him we mourn, we will try no more.

But, — what a useful, awful word is that ! “ But,” says the reader, “ if you are so dull, give us some clue, some starting point for our imaginations.”

“ That,” we reply, “ is easy, and shall be done.”

We have given a full-length portrait of Melton de Mowbray ; Lady Helen Fawndove might have passed as his sister : and yet, how different ! In outline of feature, in light and graceful proportions, they were alike : so is the palace and its ivory model ; but the beauty of either depended on expression. It was not, to

pursue the idea, until the palace was lit up that we dreamed of its riches, and looked on beauty, various as the feelings of the human heart, shadowed in the one by a cast of stern magnificence—in the other, soft, feminine, and delicate, as the pure, transparent ivory.

The strongest point of resemblance was, probably, in the large, full, dark eyes; yet even there were shades, or rather lights, which marked the difference of character: in the one, the softness of the gazelle appeared imperishable; in the other, the fire sometimes flashed, making the darkness visible, and shewing the stormy passions of hatred, anger, or revenge.

This, however, was rare; and the strong similitude, the marked peculiarity between the eyes of both, remained unbroken. Their power of expression was unceasing in the lull of silence; in the calmest moment they were as a dark, a deep, a beautiful mystery; they beamed with intensity of thought and feeling; but, like the records of a language lost, or the mystic ruins of a nation, perished and forgotten, they defied interpretation.

The profiles of either, approaching as they did to the ideal of classical and Grecian, might have suggested the hacknied consequences, "when Greek meets Greek;" but there is a something so vulgar, so unfeminine, in "*the tug of war*," that our sense of propriety was instantly scared. Anxious as we were to make the reader comprehend the existing state between Lady Helen and Melton de Mowbray, we instantly deserted their profile and returned to the eyes, as our medium of illustration.

Two seasons—not Thomson's—but two seasons, the antipodes of nature, and the creation of heartless London, had nearly passed, and yet Lady Helen and Mowbray understood not each other. They had met in the artificial ranks of fashion and pleasure, where all is hollow and dissembling. She, as a woman, wearing that shield with which the sex conceals the heart; he, as a man, masking those feelings of which the world makes mockery. They had met in the dance, the parks, at the opera, the play, and, occasionally, at dinner: to a certain point they had read

each other as thousands may do ; in a thousand ways their taste, their thoughts, and feelings, flashed with one accord, and spoke from the volume of the eyes ; but if there was a pause.—if one would have read deeper than the brilliant surface, the leaves were turned—the page of mystery was opened—there was the cipher of deep and thrilling truths, to which neither had discovered the diamond-key ; they looked, but could see no further.

Added to this, there was in both a playfulness of thought, which, like fire-flies sporting at the mountain's base, sparkled in their gravest themes, and destroyed the certainty of solemn earnest ; it seemed as if neither could be serious, as if neither dared to betray the intensity of deep and hidden feeling ; how far they understood themselves is another question, and, for the present, we say with the eccentric Abernethy, “ do you take us for a tape-worm, and think we can walk the mazes of the inward man and see the windings of the human heart ? ” If, sometimes, we can do so, and beat the doctor himself, we now

turn from the labyrinth, thinking we have done enough to shew how far they understood each other.

Such was their relative position, when Mowbray was listening to Mr. De la Bere's friendly remonstrance, and saw, or rather fancied that he saw, the trace of preference in the supposed invitation to the opera box. Hope, vanity, or a something, whispered in his ear, that those eyes which awoke with joyous animation, and turned, as it were by instinct, from himself to the gold box—from the bijou to himself—were roused from meditations in which his honoured self had formed a part ; or, *pars pro toto*, which may be shortly interpreted, all. Such are the trifles, the airy nothings upon which love can build its fairy castle, or man can found the dictates of caprice.

To return to the Opera—as Melton de Mowbray saw the Marchioness of Blankisle enter her box with more grace and dignity than skin and bones are wont to assume, he remarked her beautiful daughter immediately behind,

and leaning on the arm of her weak but affectionate father. "How kind in the marquess!" he thought within himself; "how few fathers would be so unfashionably attentive!" and his affections certainly warmed towards the parent who had preoccupied a post envied by a host of admirers; while the mother and daughter were still in the front, and the father, resting one hand upon the chair of the latter, occupied the rear.

Melton de Mowbray recalled Mr. De la Bere's version of Pope's Homer, and thought how admirably the quotation was applied; for a few minutes he gazed upon the family picture, fixed and entranced as when a curtain is withdrawn and we stand before some masterpiece of art. Hajji Baba's cell might, indeed, be likened to the frame; and, if the setting were unworthy of the group, it told by contrast, as did the life and freshness of youth seated by the side of the stately matron, and watched by a father's anxious smile, who had noticed the gaze of admiration turned upon her who seemed unconscious of the homage.

The *tableau vivant* was, as usual, but a fleeting charm ; the door was opened, there was a slight bend of the head addressed by the marchioness to her husband, which seemed to say, “ when I bow you know what it means ;” and forthwith the marquess backed out, and three or four of the then distinguished fashionables filled up the back-ground. As the usual bows and greetings passed, Mowbray recalled the well-known manœuvrings of the mother, and thought she looked more hideous than an unswaddled mummy.

“ Pay me,” said one of a group of sporting men through which Mowbray was attempting to penetrate ; “ I told you the henpecked lord would be turned from his perch in two minutes.”

“ Five to one,” was the reply, “ that the duke ’s in the chair in five minutes ; the marchioness is blinking already—she’ll never stand the lamps.”

Ere this bet could be arranged, there was a slight derangement in Lady Blankisle’s box ; not finding the fan (which she had purposely

left at home), her ladyship arose from her chair, and requested the young goodnatured Duke of Dublin to occupy her seat.

“ Confound that manœuvrer !” cried the man who had offered the bet ; “ she beats the flying artillery, and kills her man ere the flash be seen.”

“ Ah, Mowbray !” cried a third, as he intruded himself rather forcibly between the lookers on, with his ‘ thousand pardons.’ “ What ! Melton de Mowbray in a hurry !”

“ Never, in good society.”

“ Thought it could not be,” continued the friend. “ Splendid house !—seen Lady Helen ? back her against the field. What are the odds the duke is bagged before the season’s over ? Doesn’t she look lovely to-night ?—the match will come off. Grace against cash—I’ll back the coronet ; the rich Stilton’s done for a hundred, out-and-out ; a hollow thing, eh, Mowbray ? Do you take ?”

“ Not quite, I confess,” answered Mowbray. “ Your medley of dead, living, and sexes, confound me ; you forget that at Eton we never learn grammar, and study no language

but the dead. You'll excuse my ignorance — do you speak of the house — the Duke of Norfolk — Lady Helen Crumpet, or the walls of a Stilton cheese?"

"Psha!" cried the bettor, "I mean Lady Helen Fawndove; and the long odds that she is Duchess of Dublin by the end of the season: the marchioness has put them in training — there she is opposite — have you not seen her?"

"I leave to philosophers the vulgar practice of star-gazing; none but plebeians see beyond themselves."

"None so blind as those who won't see," said one of the party, all but a stranger to our hero. "I will back her one hundred to twenty."

"To speak in your language, gentlemen," said Mowbray, with distant hauteur; "my books are made up; allow me, sir, to pass from the betting stand. I beg you a thousand pardons — forgive my blindness," addressing the all-but stranger, as, in making an effort to proceed, he trod — of course, accidentally — on his toes.

An oath more befitting the turf than the

opera escaped ; but Mowbray bowed so benignly, looked so unutterably wretched at the *faux pas* he had made, that the sufferer could only curse him in his heart, and say it was nothing ; but he had his revenge—the torture was not completed—the friend (No. Three) renewed his attack, upon Melton's attempting to bolt, and said, in a well-turned compliment, with a significant wink,

“ He who owns the powers of Eclipse need only walk over the course.”

“ Capital !” cried the sufferer, laughing, because Mowbray looked immovably stern ; “ ten to one, Dublin won't do that. I see a rival duke, old Q., has his eye on the stakes. What are the odds she does not train for the Milky-way ? What a winning duchess she would make !”

“ Her eyes are worthy a brighter sphere,” remarked the friend. “ What think you, Mowbray ? Lady Helen was never born to be a milkmaid.”

This allusion to the daily milk-bath of old Q. (as the Duke of Queensberry was frequently styled) was more than Mowbray could

endure; for an instant it mastered the Stoicism of fashion. There was no mistaking the allusion; for, so widely was the fact known and accredited, that (passing the belief of Piccadilly and its neighbourhood being supplied with milk from the Duke's bath) we have ourselves, in later days, seen a letter addressed by a Frenchman to his friend in "*Pic a du lait*," a transition from Piccadilly, which must have flowed from the well-known source of his grace's bath.

To return from this explanatory digression, the soft, almost voluptuous, eyes of Mowbray kindled with contempt and anger; his lips were compressed till they rivalled the pallid cheeks, and his moustaches crisped and curled as if they felt the fire which was flashing from the eyes.

There needed no other answer to the question which had been addressed: there was an awkward pause, when, luckily, the curtain dropped, the group into which Mowbray had entered melted away with the crowd which was flowing behind the scenes.

Had these sporting men—these "how do"

club men—laid their jockey-whips across the bare flesh, Mowbray had smarted less than in listening to the coarse observations on her, “the brightest of her kind.” And yet, alas! this is but the tone in which man with his fellow-man is too apt to indulge, when speaking of all in womankind but—his sister.

CHAPTER IX.

THE OPERA.

“Such are the lords of the creation.”

“BOXKEEPER!” cried Mowbray, his silver voice firm and unruffled; for, whatever he might have felt, the habit of self-possession quickly whispered, that he had no sufficient cause to betray or act upon the feelings which he had endured — “boxkeeper!” he repeated, in a louder voice, when the door of Lady Blankisle’s box was opened, and rendered idle the keeper’s approach.

As Mowbray politely, and not unwillingly, retreated a step, to allow the exit of one or more gay gallant, the Duke of Dublin made his appearance, joyous and laughing as usual, with one hand immersed in the waves of his curling hair; which, however, was speedily tendered to Mowbray, with, —

“ My dear fellow, yours is the sweetest voice I have heard to-night. I thought I was hooked, without chance of escape, when I remembered I had something very particular to say. And,” speaking in an under tone, “ I wish to get behind the scenes, and thought I was planted for the night, and tied to that stick of a marchioness. That’s all ; good bye.” And the duke hurried off, like a boy from his school-room.

“ Fare thee well, Dublin ! your secret is safe,” answered Mowbray aloud, and entered the box, from which some two or three had retreated.

The manœuvring marchioness had resumed her seat in front, and welcomed Mr. Melton de Mowbray with proud, yet flattering condescension, laying, as usual, some stress on the “ de,” a monosyllable which she never omitted. Lady Helen bowed with her wonted grace, as those immediately behind her chair partially withdrew, and allowed him to pay his devoirs to the ladies.

The men amongst whom Mowbray now formed one, differed widely from the group

into which he had fallen in the pit. We need scarcely say how much he himself was unlike those men of the turf from whom he had escaped. In manner the difference was, perhaps, more striking than in dress; for, in this respect, each individual was obliged to pay a certain deference to rules, which brought the whole nearer to a level; and Melton de Mowbray's style was more peculiar, as denoting the perfect gentleman, than the extravagances of idle fancy. It is true that François, the valet, in glorifying his master's talents, was wont to tell of certain debates and studies, touching the harmony and propriety of colours; how "*di uppare vaistcoat vas nevar vedded to di ondare, vidout asking tree times;*" and how, gathering another simile from the same service, "*di breaches, di stuckins, and di-di-di—rot you call di ting in di chest? Ah! n'importe, di stuckins and di caleçons. Ah! je me rapelle, di drawers were, like man and di vife, veaved into von.*" But, what of this? No man is a hero to his valet, whatever he may be to an author. The effect had all the simplicity of perfection in painting or poetry; it

seemed so natural and easy, that every one fancied he could do the same. "What is it," asked the envious, "that gives Mowbray that distinguished air of fashion?" "And what is it," asks the English bonnet-maker, in despair, "that gives to the Parisian tie, nay, to the very cut of a riband, a something inimitable and exclusive?" "It is nothing," answered thousands; and, like the poor milliner, they attempted to imitate, and failed.

Few, indeed, of those who made the attempt could boast the same exquisite materials to work upon; we speak not of the produce of the loom, but of that heavenly masterpiece, created man. Mowbray's figure was so finely proportioned, so endowed with innate grace, that it seemed to impart a charm not only to all he did, but to all he wore. Genius can effect much, can conquer a thousand difficulties, give the impress of its power to all it touches; but, on the beauty of the substance wrought, must depend the approach to perfection.

We select two of the men nearest to Lady Helen, as forming a singular contrast to Melton

de Mowbray, and also as being, in their way, the marked men of the day—Sir Charles Wifington and Lord Jimmysham. Both were his seniors, particularly the former, who was then in the height of his glory. Both were exquisites of the highest order, and neither of them the fools in their follies for which the profane vulgar gave them credit. There is a wide difference between the want and the misapplication of talent; and, however lamentable it may be to see a man play the fool, no one can play it well who is in reality the character he affects to be. The baronet, we suspect, was the deeper read man of the two, but to a certain point they were both well read and well informed; tact and judgment supplied the rest. With the works of our dramatic authors, from the earliest to the latest, they were both familiar; and, when they could be grave, and talk sense, it was highly amusing to listen to the acute and sensible remarks, the sound or witty criticisms, which mingled with their knowledge of the subject; and, more than all, it was amusing to see the distant back-ground to which their senseless imitators were thrown.

In after years Sir Charles Wiffington laid claim to pretensions higher than that of critic, by publishing a tragedy, which walked, if it has not kept, the stage a very respectable number of nights. Whether Lord Jimmysham was too wise or too idle to assume the author, we know not ; but, though we have often seen his name in print, it clearly has been against his consent and wishes.

But, to the men : beginning with the elder, we should say, that Sir Charles Wiffington was the most extraordinary, thoroughbred puppy we ever beheld ; and, to glance at the younger, he was the best bred man who ever made a puppy of himself. Sir Charles, though not remarkable for height, stood erect, in the pride of youth and expectation ; and little did we then dream of meeting the same man in after years, bent double with sorrow, care, and penury — the lingering victim of chancery's " hope deferred " — the heart-sick prisoner, who pined for rights, restored when the cup of life was poisoned, chilled, and worthless. " Poor Wiffington ! " we said, with as honest a sigh as ever was given to a fellow-creature,

— “and can that be the same we saw and listened to with boyish wonder and admiration? is that the man whose word was the fiat in fashion — without whose presence the first and brightest circle was incomplete?”

Such were our melancholy reflections, as a friend, pointing to one bowed with sorrow to the earth, and with difficulty taking a weary walk within the rules, said, —“ Yonder is Sir Charles Wiffington !”

Reader, forgive us, if one of the living evidences, bearing the chancellor’s seal of misery, and crushed beneath the pressure of its impending weight, has led us from past to present — from the tale of airy nothings to a stern and melancholy truth — a lesson of mortality.

The marked features in Sir Charles were his nose and eyes — both were large and prominent; in other respects, his figure was slight, and not remarkable. Composure, self-possession, and harmony, appeared in word and action; the full dark eyes glided from point to point as leisurely as his feet. There was serenity in his very nose, as it inhaled

the perfumes he carried, or breathed the breath of life — not a muscle moved ; and as to profane purposes, to which noses are sometimes applied, the idea seemed inadmissible. In dress, there was an *outréism* which, in all things, passed the extremes of fashion : if the high collar, or “lover’s wings,” worn by the Prince of Wales, were condescendingly patronised, Sir Charles Wiffington’s were worthy of an emperor, and spread, at least, to the tip of his nose ; if he sported tight silk pantaloons, they extended so little below the calf, that he looked as if about to slip through them : but, how shall we describe a peculiarity his own — a whole congregation of waistcoats ? It is years since we looked upon the sight ; but, we think, they must have exceeded in number the capes upon a box-coat — in colours, the glorious rainbow. Amidst them occasionally nestled a “quizzing-glass,” in proportion to the eye, the prominence of which appeared to justify the use of such assistance, though, as the name implies, it was more frequently the plaything of saucy fops ; cus-

tom has since reconciled us to this useful economy of sight even in the butt end of a whip, which, by the way, is the happiest of inventions for cutting one friend and seeing another. Add cosmetics and perfumes, which bordered fearfully upon effeminacy ; the finest French cambric handkerchief peeping purposely from its pocket ; raven hair studiously arranged, yet calm as a new wig ;—and you have Sir Charles Wiffington before you as he stood by the side of Melton de Mowbray.

As to Lord Jimmysham, we must dress him in haste,—an event which never yet occurred unless at his birth.

Jimmysham was decidedly handsome ; and, if his light eyes were wanting in the sublime dignity of expression which we associate with the father of the gods, this did not prevent a strong resemblance to the cloud-compelling almighty Jove.

As we are not writing to heathens, and, as the history of pagan gods and goddesses is no longer the exclusive study of our classical schools, it may be well to say that his lord-

ship's features approached the *beau idéal* of a celebrated statue, representing Jupiter, the supreme deity of the ancients. Who first made the discovery, we know not; but, once made, the engraver's art multiplied the idea, and, doubtless, served to strengthen the chain which bound the host of his fair worshippers. As may be supposed, the likeness was stronger upon paper than in the living man; for, although the hair might be arranged—the moustaches petted and pointed to favour the similitude—the neck and bust were veiled by the dress of man, which, most assuredly, is any thing but godlike. In speaking of his dress, we are bound to allow originality to a man whose name, like that of Wellington, is immortalised by a portion of dress, which, since the fall of Adam, is even more indispensable than a pair of boots. It was not this, however, nor his ruffles, when ruffles were unknown, except at court; it was not the chains “in which he was hung,” when that fashion was confined to the pirate of the seas, or gentlemen of the highway; neither was it the taste and judgment, which even

François allowed with a shrug, that made Lord Jimmysham the fascinating puppy.

These were accessories after the fact ; but the fact was, that he owed his success to the grace and polish of good breeding. As a young man, he always reminded us of the *politesse* of the good old French schools grafted upon an English stock. There was none of the grimace of the Parisian noble ; but there was all his devotion to the fair sex — to society in general. Even Jimmysham would have blushed to see a lady ring the bell, open the door, seek a book, or reach a scarf ; but it was not by these more home-spun acts of politeness that he won his way. There was a delicacy, a refinement, a *prévoyance* in his attentions — a masterly perception of the elegant nothings, which flatter, gratify, and win the heart of woman : we are painting men as they are, not as they should be : and again we repeat, that, without talent, mind, sense, and imagination, Lord Jimmysham could not have shone in the sphere to which, unfortunately, his abilities were devoted. Your foolish puppies are those who flash for a

season, and sell the remainder of their lives to Jews, poverty, and ruin.

One more remark, which applies with equal force to the portraits we have sketched : however quaint and extraordinary the style adopted, it sat upon them as easy as if all the world were dressed alike. No twitchings of the nerves bespoke a consciousness of the vulgar gaze : there were no awkward misgivings of the part they played ; none, in short, of those symptoms which betray the empty coxcomb, like one who (to quote an instance we saw but yesterday), going to a country church, with ruffles on his wrist, and rings on his kid gloves, was so overpowered by the admiration he had courted, that the hands, after searching in vain for a hiding-place, looked as restless and wretched as a hunted rat with its earth stopped.

During the interval employed in our sketch, we must request the reader to imagine that the curtain has been raised — the lamps not only raised, but trimmed anew, much to the annoyance of Lady Blankisle — that is, when she found it convenient to be thus troubled.

“Helen, my dear, have you brought my bottle of salts?” said the marchioness, as she gently passed a hand over her forehead.

“No, mamma ; you assured me your head would not ache this evening ; but I fear that it does.”

“Slightly, my love — you, perhaps, have your *vinaigrette* box ?”

“You forget, dear mamma, that I do not possess such a thing.”

Mowbray started, inwardly at least — then gazed more intently than ever on Lady Helen’s eyes, but could read nothing : he saw, or fancied that he saw, a smile at the corner of the mouth : if so, however, it was but momentary. She continued, with an air of concern, to express some affectionate regret, which Lady Blankisle interrupted by saying,—

“I see your cousin, Georgiana, has been more provident ; she is coquetting with one at this moment.”

“Do allow me,” said Lord Jimmysham, “to be your messenger ; and disarm a hand which wields a bauble as Flavia did the fan which

‘ Gave coolness to the matchless dame ;
To every other breast a flame.’ ”

“ Do not trust him,” said Sir Charles Wiffington, “ near one

‘ Who can the least and slightest toy
With such resistless art employ ;’ ”

a truth which his lordship forgot to quote. “ Pray do not trust him,” repeated Sir Charles, adding, with one of his calm, satirical sneers ; “ by the side of so much earthly beauty, his feet will lose the wings of Mercury, and his head be turned like Jove’s by Danae.”

“ You are too severe, Sir Charles,” replied the marchioness ; “ but, for a poet, your judgment is good :” and, turning to Jimmysham, who was bending to receive permission to fly, and dazzling her ladyship’s sensitive eyes by his profusion of chains, she added,—“ No, indeed, I will not allow you, it were unjust to my niece ; for I see you are armed with a shower of gold.”

“ Very good! — excellent!” said Jimmysham, smiling a laugh as naturally as if Jove had been complimented on one of his attributes: “ doubt not my return,” he continued. “ Jove had never left the skies had he looked on beauty so worthy of his throne as that before me.”

The marchioness, who in her youth had been a slight beauty, received a portion of Lord Jimmysham’s bow and speech as an offering due to Juno; while the lovely Lady Helen Fawndove took the compliment as Venuses are wont to take the empty homage of those they do not value.

“ I shall be delighted to go,” said Sir Charles Wiffington, who was standing behind Lady Blankisle’s chair, and hoping in his heart to succeed to the duke’s seat; but the result of his joke had left him no alternative.

“ Rather let me be honoured,” said Mowbray, who was standing somewhat in the rear of the two who had already offered their services. “ Poets are more treacherous than the gods. Sir Charles will linger in the clouds; and I am no judge of beauty except in a

horse, 'where ignorance is bliss : '—what is it, Sir Charles ?”

“ You won't commit the folly of being wise,” said Sir Charles Wiffington, with doubtful emphasis upon the word *you*, in revenge of Mowbray's slur upon poetry.

But Lady Blankisle thought that it was time to instruct a young man with five thousand a-year, and sole heir to the richest banker in London. She accordingly granted to Sir Charles the delight he craved, *contra cœur*, and, by that means, cleared the way for Mowbray's approach.

“ Do tell me,” she said, “ if it is true that your friend, Boltville, is likely to inherit his uncle's estates ? Do point him out to me : is he not standing in the bend of the house, in the box next to the duke's ? I am so curious to know him.”

Mowbray looked, but his position did not command the bend ; and he pleaded his most excessive regrets at not being able to see a friend whose name, connected with the heir-dom, awakened some undefined notions of jealousy. There was no cause for this ; the

marchioness never sought for uncertainties, unless to make sure of a mask.

“They say he is handsome—I knew his mother—I am really curious—do take my seat, and tell me if I am right?” said the marchioness, as she once more retreated to the rear.

Mowbray obeyed; and, having ascertained that the marchioness’s eyes were not quite so weak as she affected, he was about to resign his point of view, when Lady Blankisle assured him her curiosity was satisfied.

“It is a relief,” she said, “to escape the glare of those odious lamps:” I suffer so much from nervous headach. Ah!—hush! hush!—not a word: this is my favourite quartet—pray, don’t move: I insist upon your keeping my seat: even a De Mowbray should learn to obey,” she added in a lower tone, with one of the most gracious smiles, and with her skinny hand pressed Mowbray into her chair and service.

At this moment Melton de Mowbray caught sight of the sporting group in the pit—their eyes were fixed upon Lady Blankisle’s box;

and he could see by their manner that they were canvassing the odds for or against himself: he felt that he *had been manœuvred*; and, spurning the toils with which he had fallen, he would, had it been possible, have left the spot for which, but a little while before, he sighed as the goal of earthly bliss. Lady Helen Fawndove, on the other hand, but too sensible of her mother's weakness, felt humiliated and indignant.

"He shall not think me a slave to be sold and bought," said Lady Helen within herself, as she proudly, yet mournfully, assumed an air of cold indifference.

"Is she too a manœuvrer?" thought Mowbray, for an instant, as he looked on the daughter, and recalled the smile which he had witnessed in the morning. Their eyes met—were fixed for a moment: the first expression in either passed away; anger, injustice, and hypocrisy, perished in the light of kindling love; each looked upon the heart's mysterious page, and each seemed to have found the diamond key which unlocked its beautiful treasure.

It is difficult to say how long, or how deeply, they might have read, had not the manœuvrer closed the volume; and, as usual with such persons, defeated her own design.

“How exquisitely sweet!” exclaimed the marchioness, at some ravishing turn of her favourite quartet. “Helen, my love, do lend Mr. De Mowbray your book—the words are even sweeter than the music.”

Lady Helen, who knew the words by heart, was glad that the book had fallen at her feet, and wished it might remain there; but mamma’s eyes were too quick, in spite of their delicacy; and Mowbray was called upon to pick up the book, and Lady Helen to point out the words—of course, they were all about love, and that sort of thing. Mowbray gave the praise which politeness exacted; and said within himself, in the bitterness of spirit,—

“I will not be made a laughing-stock for bettors.”

Lady Helen Fawndove read his feelings, once more humbled and indignant; she stifled a sigh which struggled for escape, and, with her opera-glass, concealed a rising tear, which

had fallen on the page of her dark expressive eyes.

Sir Charles Wiffington re-entered: it was a relief to both; for he withdrew the eyes of Lady Blankisle, by whom they felt that they were watched as a fowler fixes on the game for which his nets are spread: if, however, there was not a sense of positive restraint for the rest of the opera, truth was concealed in the depths of the heart—feeling was shrouded by the garb of worldly manners, and, more than all, by that tragi-comic playfulness of style so peculiar to both, and which always left the hearers in doubt how far their words were in earnest.

“A thousand thanks, my dear Sir Charles! pray forgive the trouble I have given,” said the marchioness, as she received *le vinaigre aromatique*, and had recourse to the remedy she did not require.

Sir Charles, of course, was only too happy. Mowbray's eyes were irresistibly attracted by the bauble in Lady Blankisle's hands; they followed its journeys as it travelled from her ladyship's lap to her ladyship's nose, from

the nose to the lap: he almost fancied he could recognise his morning's acquaintance: he turned to Lady Helen's eyes for confirmation, — they said nothing; but, surprised in the act of watching Mowbray's scrutiny, the tongue was obliged to speak, and said, with perfect *naïveté*, —

“ I hope you do not suffer like mamma. I wish I possessed a box to offer; shall I borrow my cousin's?”

“ By no means,” answered Mowbray; “ I assure you my head does not ache, although it is somewhat confused. What a dream is life! — do you ever doubt reality?”

“ Oh, yes, constantly; but there is no doubting the beauty of this air, though the words are silly nonsense;” and, forthwith, Lady Helen composed herself to listen with such devoted attention, that it would have been rudeness in Mowbray to speak another word.

“ I feel so greatly obliged,” continued the marchioness, between the interval of application, “ I am such a sad sufferer. Is not Georgiana divine? — quite worthy of your pen, Sir Charles. My headach has passed

like magic — quite gone: you are so kind. I hope you did not play *le médecin malgré lui*."

"Oh, fie! my dear Lady Blankisle, how ungracious to suspect me! I do assure you my heart is still on the left side; and, with permission, I will return the *vinaigrette* to your lovely niece: I fear she is, in truth, a sufferer," said Sir Charles, with some stress on the word "truth."

The marchioness was much too old and steady a manœuvrer to be discomposed; she begged the box might be restored. "It was so like Georgiana's gentle nature: she was so grieved; but who could have thought that one so young, so blooming, ever suffered from the nerves?"

The baronet once more played Mercury: Lord Jimmysham followed, and, waving the dignity of the thunderbolting Jove, begged to be introduced under Sir Charles's wing; others bowed in and bowed out, some said their soft nothings, some whispered their bits of bitter scandal, others sported their milk-

and-water wit, and so they came and went ; while Mowbray sat out the ballet—dissatisfied, yet fascinated ; doubting much, yet determined to know more, if the opportunity occurred.

CHAPTER X.

THE PRESS-ROOM.

"Madam, I do, as is my duty,
Honour the shadow of your shoe-tie."

HUDIBRAS.

FROM the days of Chivalry to those of Radical Reform, from the hour when men broke lances instead of fans, even to the present moment, beauty has held its undisputed empire.

When we say that Lady Helen Fawndove was the reigning beauty of the season, we need scarcely add, that to be in her train was to shine with reflected honour; and many were those who sought to catch the rays which fell from the star they worshipped.

We know not whether the ballet-master had intended a compliment to Lord Jimmysham by displaying the gods and goddesses,

Olympus and Jove, in all his glory; such, however, was the closing scene which had trespassed, rather considerably, upon the Sabbath morning: but their immortal reign was over; the curtain had dropped like a modest cloud before their beauteous forms, which, of course, needed not the garments of sinful mortals. Their wings were folded in the wardrobe of the house; their brief hour was passed, they had become, like their petticoats, invisible, and left the imagination to divine the luxury of their ambrosial slumbers.

But the cloaking, furring, shawling, left little time to think of aught but the happiness of being jammed in the press-room. The bees were about to swarm—the honeycombs and hive were about to be deserted—all was bustle and busy preparation. “Permit me the honour?” “Do allow me the happiness?” with all the possible variations on the gamut of small courtesies, were buzzed by the drones as they aided the gentle females to prune their wings.

The Marchioness of Blankisle was a queen-bee of most imperial order, though it must be

confessed, that the members of her suite were more attracted by one bright jewel in her sceptre, than by the hand which held it. Lord Jimmysham and the baronet had returned, and were amongst the many who sought the honour of escorting the marchioness and her daughter, the queen of beauty, to their carriage.

Lord Jimmysham, with his usual tact, had taken up his position behind Lady Helen's chair, and forestalled Mowbray's intention of paying the devoirs of an attendant page: just what was needed first was tendered just in the happy moment, and arranged just as it should be. A *femme de chambre de Paris* could not have excelled his lordship's art; who, if fame say true, had even accomplished that master-piece of human efforts, and could attach a pin without pricking his own finger or wounding the wearer: this, however, we give on report, as in the present instance his abilities were not submitted to the arduous test.

The shawl, cloak, and paraphernalia, all were complete, except a short tippet of swan's-

down, which was to encircle a neck graceful as that which had furnished the material. This had just been put into position, Lady Helen's tiny fingers had secured the silken tie, and, with a movement which seemed a part of the last duty, Lord Jimmysham's arm was just offered to Lady Helen when Lady Blankisle said,

“ Now, my lord, I should feel proud of your assistance ; the House is so crowded, may I beg you to escort me to the lobby ? ”

Jimmysham's good breeding was taxed to the utmost, but, before the demand was concluded, he had looked the most honoured and delighted of men ; instead of the round and lovely arm of the daughter, that of the dry-skinned, bony mother, was resting upon his.

“ Helen, my love,” said the marchioness, “ where is your father ? he has forgotten his promise ; the smell of those lamps will make me faint, it is impossible to wait. Mr. De Mowbray, it is almost too bad to impose so grave an office, but will you take charge of Lady Helen until we meet the marquess.”

Mowbray saw through the manœuvre,

though the lamps were partly extinguished ; but, anxious to speak to the daughter with comparative privacy, he this time forgave the mother, and felt the delight he professed.

“ How did you like the opera ? I thought Lady Helen appeared unusually grave ? ” said Mowbray, addressing the fair being on his arm as they were slowly progressing through the dirty, dingy, narrow passages.

“ I fear that could not be, for who could look grave at an opera-tragedy ? I am so glad I did behave well for once,” said Lady Helen, with one of her playful smiles.

“ And why not be serious ? ” asked Mowbray, somewhat nettled at her not pleading guilty to the gravity which he himself had felt, and a little puzzled to know why he had asked that question when he longed to put another.

“ Have you so soon forgotten that you taught me to laugh at a female *Æneas* singing her woes ? Might I not retort the charge, and accuse the master of forgetting the lesson he taught ? ”

“ I, oh no ! it is, as you say, irresistibly amusing — I laughed as usual to see —

“ The ghost of the godlike Achilles,
Stalk over the plain of daffadowndillies.”

“ Æneas was the hero of the night? ay—true; but,” said Mowbray, changing at once the style and tenor of his voice to a low, earnest, and silver note, as his thoughts wandered from Æneas to Troy; from Troy to fair Helen; “ but, I had hoped for a kinder welcome this evening; you scarcely returned my bow.”

“ You seem determined to bear false witness to-night—I bowed through half-a-dozen heads; to have removed the rubbish there needed ——”

“ A stronger arm than this,” said Mowbray, completing the sentence; and, to strengthen the allusion, he gently pressed the hand of that arm which rested on his own. “ I was, perhaps, unreasonable,” he continued; “ but ‘ hope had built a brighter dream.’ Did not I see your carriage in St. James’s Street?”

“ Nay; now you are unreasonable to make me answer for the eyes of another. Confess.”

“ I do confess that I was wrong. Doubtless, Lady Helen’s eyes have enough to do to

answer for themselves ; but I did see you, and was vain enough to think you saw me, as I stood at the windows of my club. Was it not so ?”

“ I believe I was guilty of that accident.”

“ Lady Blankisle was on your right ?”

“ I believe that it might be so ; but my hands are like certain members who seldom know which side they belong to.”

“ And your pet greyhound sat opposite to yourself ?”

“ Even so ; but why take these depositions ? Are we to be summoned before the bench for running away with a post ?” asked Lady Helen, with a smile, as if she thought the interrogations had proceeded far enough.

“ One more question,” said Mowbray earnestly. “ Did I not see a box ?”

“ The coachman usually sits on one,” answered Lady Helen, with one of her arch, expressive, yet unfathomable, looks.

“ Nay ; now I am serious,” said Mowbray, who could not help smiling as he spoke ; “ but you will not understand me.”

“ It is rarely possible ; yet this time I

fancied that I did, for I judged by the words which you uttered but now, — a confession which left me no doubt.”

“ Indeed ! how ! what can you mean ? ” asked Mowbray, turned from his purposed inquiry by some implied delinquency.

“ Only, that your mere ‘ judges of beauty in a horse ’ rarely look to the inside of a carriage.”

“ Have I not proved to the contrary ? ”

“ True ; I had almost forgotten that my dog, mamma, and, I believe, myself, divided the honour of your notice ; but if, as usual with sporting men, you did not look first at the horses, I concluded they were honoured the second, and the coach-box discovered *en passant*.”

“ I saw little but yourself, and only know that you passed like the wind.”

“ How dreadful ! ” cried Lady Helen, affecting horror. “ Pray don’t accuse me of sorcery ; I tremble at the thought, since you say you are serious.”

“ I would be so, Lady Helen, would you allow me to seek the truth.”

“ I pray you be silent on a charge so awful ; forget the depositions you have taken ; this sudden light recalls the honours paid to a witch. What a crowd ! How shall we get into the room ? ”

“ Keep close to me, my dear,” said Lady Blankisle, looking back as she gained the entrance to the press-room to which she had purposely led the way, while Mowbray had attempted to avail himself of her kind consideration, as far as crowding, strangers, and dark passages, would permit ; but, as must have been seen, to little purpose.

“ Yes, mamma,” answered Lady Helen, and, turning to Mowbray, she added, “ if we penetrate this mass of people, I think we shall merit your accusation.”

Mowbray had only time to say in an undertone, “ As yet you have not heard it ; ” when all his attention was required to keep “ fair Helen ” in the wake of the marchioness. Lord Jimmysham was in his element ; Jupiter himself, with thunderbolts in one hand, and sceptre in the other, would have been distanced in the race. His smiles and honied words to “ dear

lady this," and "dearer lady that;" his well-turned compliment — his elegant flattery to beauty — his "ten thousand pardons" to another (no beauty), won his way, like water through the countless sands, till the Marchioness of Blankisle, like an imperial queen-bee, attached herself to the wall, and was presently surrounded by swarms of admirers.

In taking up her position, the manœuvrer had placed her fair daughter under her wing; but while she played the prudent and "quite correct" mamma, she managed to offer the protection of that wing which left Mowbray a centinel by Lady Helen's side.

Lord Jimmysham now and then looked like thunder, and his eyes flashed a blue light; but the good breeding of the man instantly mastered his godlike ire, and restored to his features a celestial serenity. One after the other the drones crawled up to buzz their compliments. Had Cocker ever been admitted to the dear, dingy, small room, he might have made an arithmetical table for the use of fruitful mammas, with daughters hanging on hand, by watching the face of the

Marchioness of Blankisle. To younger sons, her look, of course, was as cold and fixed as the dried head of a New Zealander; but, to the hopeful generation of rising elders, her thin shrivelled face was smiled into wrinkles in exact proportions to their thousands per annum. This was the main point; title had its weight, but never influenced unwisely. The genealogical tree was worshipped, if enriched by a plum; her code was moral as her calculations were just; the spendthrift was repulsed, the gambler awed by a frown which neutralised the civil simper on the mouth. For instance, when the Duke of — made his graceless bow, her ladyship's face was distorted with gracious benignity; the smiling crowsfeet shot from her diminished eyes like stars upon the ice; the lines upon the cheeks, "where once a dimple played," were marked like degrees upon a parchment globe; and she smirked from pole to pole in compliment to the "excellent worthy young man," whose noble tree boasted some three or four golden plums, which he was not likely to throw away by a shake of the elbow. But, mark the

difference when the Hon. Rich Stilton, M.P. &c. &c. succeeded the duke. The countenance was frozen ; it was, at least, one hundred degrees colder ; the ready-monied Stilton had been pigeoned the night before, and lost fifty thousand pounds at a sitting. “ A sad thing ! ” said Lady Blankisle, when she heard of it ; “ quite lamentable in so young a man ! If Cræsus played, he might be a beggar to-morrow. I hope, Lady Vinetree ” (her informant), “ you will mark your disapprobation, for the sake of society.”

“ Oh, yes ! ” replied the lady, whose “ society ” consisted in four sons and six unmarried daughters ; “ and, as a mother, I hope you, my dear Lady Blankisle, will do the same.”

“ I feel that I ought,” replied the stern moralist, “ though it will give excess of pain. I own I thought him a very charming young man ; and ” (in a whisper,) “ I do really believe that he admired my dear Helen.”

“ Ah, indeed ! ” exclaimed Lady Vinetree, in an under tone ; “ well, now, do you know I fancied he was marked in his attentions to

my fifth. I fear he must be hopeless and incorrigible ; quite a double dealer."

" If so," added Lady Blankisle, bitterly, " he deserves to lose in love as he has done at cards."

And poor Stilton was welcomed, as we have described, and dismissed accordingly.

Amidst the clustering admirers, Sir Charles Whiffington once more glided up to Lady Helen ; now looking through his eye-glass, and now indulging his nerveless nose with the exquisite perfume on his cambric handkerchief as he approached. We know not whether Cupid had pierced his panoply of countless waistcoats ; but it certainly appeared as if Lady Helen's eyes had attraction, from which he found it difficult to diverge far or long. The room, crowded to excess, was heated in proportion ; and, either from this cause, or the effort in defeating the leading questions of Mowbray, there was a more than usual brilliancy in Lady Helen's eyes, a more than wonted colour on her cheeks.

" Oppressively warm, is it not ?" said Sir Charles, gently fanning himself with his cam-

bric, and fixing his large dark eyes upon Lady Helen, as he remarked the animation which played beneath her silken lashes.

“ It is, indeed, very hot,” answered Lady Helen, glad of the opportunity of answering Sir Charles’s gaze ; “ though I feel as if I could blush most unfashionably, I fear I shall faint ere long.”

Mowbray looked anxiously round to read if her fears were real, but said nothing ; Sir Charles, with more energy than usual, exclaimed :

“ Heaven forbid that you destroy the poet’s beautiful image which this Italian warmth has realized ! I could say with Rowe,

“ Let me for ever gaze,
And bless the new-born glories that adorn thee ;
From every blush that kindles in thy cheek
Ten thousand little loves and graces spring,
To revel in the roses.”

“ For shame !” cried Lady Blankisle, whose maternal ear had caught this compliment to her daughter. “ Poets ought not to use their wit to flatter and betray.”

“Some beauties,” answered Sir Charles, fixing his own eyes on those of the marchioness, “can only be traced by the diamond pencil of the poet.”

“What delicious perfume! Sir Charles,” said Mowbray to the baronet as he waved his handkerchief, and anxious to turn the conversation. “May I ask where it is to be obtained?”

“Gattie and Pierce contribute to my toilet,” was the reply; “nothing equal to them; if they savour of the old school they are perfection in all they sell.”

“You forget how they offended you to-day,” said Lord Jimmysham.

“How could you quarrel with perfection? is it that poets find it so often? Do tell us how it happened?” said Lady Helen.

“It was but this morning,” said Sir Charles Whiffington, “that I bought a gold tooth-pick for my monkey; and a strange ill-bred fellow at the counter took me for a porter, and asked if I would carry it home.”

“Insufferable impertinence!” cried Lord Jimmysham, with a frown worthy of Jupiter.

“ I hope you stabbed him with the toothpick, and washed out the insult in his plebeian blood,” said Lady Helen, with one of her arch quiet looks.

“ I hope not,” added Mowbray ; “ that fellow, Sir Charles, has paid you the highest possible compliment — I shall deal there in future.”

Sir Charles Whiffington, accustomed to supremacy in those days, stared at young Mowbray for a time through his glass, and then said, “ We demand an explanation.”

“ He must have thought *Sir Charles Whiffington* could never be mistaken ; had he offered *me* his shop, I should have taken it as a compliment.”

“ And put the insult in your pocket ? ” asked Lord Jimmysham, amused at the notion.

“ No ! ” replied Mowbray, “ that might have spoiled the set of my coat ; but if, like the toothpick, I found it cumbersome, I would have placed it on my head. The gentleman *par excellence* can never be eclipsed.”

“ Beneath a knot, or hidden by a brown-paper parcel ? ” asked Sir Charles Whiffington,

inclined to dispute the position, and seemingly horrified at the notion.

“ Undoubtedly, my dear Sir Charles,” said Mowbray, in his most affected style ; adding, as he drew up his handsome person, “ a mere crown and sceptre, Sir Charles ; in my case, for instance ——.”

“ Come, come, Whiffington,” said Lord Jimmysham, “ you must forgive the shopman’s flattery—you are too severe ; I dare say he thought you had, at least, one waistcoat pocket to spare.”

“ Can Sir Charles ever find *one*—there is such risk of being lost in a crowd ?” asked Lady Helen with a quiet smile, as her eyes rested on the strata of waistcoats with all the innocence and beauty of a gazing gazelle.

Sir Charles just bestowed a passing look upon himself, as if to ascertain whether he had on a waistcoat or not ; and then, addressing Lady Helen, he was saying something of some beings who are “ so pre-eminently beautiful that no crowd ——”

When, “ the Marchioness of Blankisle’s

carriage!" uttered most intrusively, broke the thread of his compliment.

"Lady Blankisle's carriage stops the way!" was echoed once, twice, thrice, and again.

"Where can your father be," said Lady Blankisle to her dear Helen.

"Yonder, mamma; he is waiting our approach."

"My dear marquess," said the smiling marchioness, as she gained the side of her husband, "we thought you had deserted us; you never came near my box."

"You forget, my love, that I agreed to meet you here," said the marquess; which, properly interpreted, meant, that he had been told he was to do so.

"Well! I am glad we have met at last: and now, my dear Lord Jimmysham, I must insist upon your resigning—your arm, Blankisle, my dear."

"Utterly impossible!" cried his lordship. "You must not be so antediluvian as to take your husband's arm; indeed, I must claim

the honour of attending you to your carriage."

"For once, my lord," she said, "you must allow that old-fashioned claim of husband to supersede your arm—vastly Gothic, I allow—but you must not rebel against a woman's will."

Even as Jupiter sometimes bowed to Juno, so did Lord Jimmysham yield the arm which he wished, that is, implored to retain; having declared how wretched he felt at this invasion of his honours, he turned away rejoicing in his heart, and sought consolation by attaching himself to the loveliest married woman in the room.

"What a cold heartless thing is fashionable life!" said Mowbray, as he was leading Lady Helen Fawndove down the staircase.

"And do you really, and indeed, think so?" asked Lady Helen, struck by the deep and melancholy tone in which the words were uttered.

"What did I say?" asked Mowbray, struck in his turn by a tone in her voice which seemed to vibrate with his own, and scarcely

conscious that he had uttered his thoughts aloud.

“So soon forgotten? then it must have been my fancy: the tone and words were strange, for Melton de Mowbray surely can have no quarrel with the world,” said Lady Helen, endeavouring to recover the playfulness of manner which the melancholy of Mowbray’s voice had chased away for the moment.

“No, Lady Helen!” said Mowbray again, dropping the mask of fashion; “it was not fancy. This world in which we live is cold and heartless, dreary as the waste of waters which made the dove seek refuge in the ark: if there be happiness on earth, it is not in scenes like these.”

“I feel highly flattered,” said Lady Helen, still attempting to rally her usual manner.

“Lady Helen—*dear* Helen!” trembled on the lips, but “Helen” alone was audible. “You know that if I have been wretched this night, I am repaid this moment while thus I hold you on my arm. I had hoped a kinder welcome. Did I read you rightly as you passed in the carriage? Was it not your

cousin's box?—did you not point in token?—did you not?”

“ Pray do not add to the list of my offences,” said Lady Helen, interrupting Mowbray's queries : “ I fear I did a very foolish thing ; but the wisest are sometimes taken by surprise.”

“ Helen — dear Helen ! ” said Mowbray, taking the hand of that arm which he pressed to his side, “ I pray you forbear that heartless style—say that I did not dream—that I did not hope without foundation, when I dared to think that this hand, that your eyes, your smile, spoke and said, you will be welcomed to-night. Will not Lady Helen confirm it in her words ? ”

In these awful moments women have generally more self-possession than men. “ You have no conscience,” said Lady Helen, though in a voice somewhat more tremulous than usual : “ you have accused me of talking with my fingers, eyes, and smiles, and now are so ungenerous as to ask for words. Woman is but too apt to betray herself with one organ

of speech ; if I add a fourth, how can I hope to escape ? ”

“ Speak then, I implore you ! dear, dear Helen ! ”

Dear Helen did speak, but merely to say “ No, no ! if I can talk with my fingers, what need of words ? ” And she playfully placed her tapered fingers on the coral lips : if, however, she did not know right from left, she remarked that she had two hands, one of which was entangled in Mowbray’s, as he handed her into the carriage ; and, as it gently returned his pressure, he felt that the tiny fingers spoke volumes of happiness.

“ Good-night ! good-night ! ” cried Mowbray with deep and thrilling warmth, as Lady Helen approached the carriage steps.

“ Good, good night ! ” was echoed by the being he supported, with this important addition ; “ I am not sorry that we met ; you were most welcome.”

“ Thanks, a thousand thanks, dear Helen ! ” whispered Mowbray ; and, in spite of the presence of linkboys, footmen, police, and rabble,

he could scarcely refrain from kissing the hand which he was obliged to resign. One servant raised the steps, another closed the door, the carriage dashed off; but, as the window was raised, Mowbray caught the reflection of that magic smile which had so enchanted him in the morning: it was the glowing sunset of a happiness which he hoped to see arise on the morrow, and, with the morrow, in new and brighter rays.

This *tête-à-tête* of absorbing interest, snatched as it were from the stream of thoughtless fashionable life, did not escape the watchful marchioness; she had shot one or two Parthian glances at her daughter, as she led the retreat; and once, when fearful that her carriage would be ordered to drive off, she was about to chide the lingering couple, when a witticism of the *canaille* order suggested the wisdom of silence. Above the din of carriages in waiting, "Lady Blankisle's carriage stops the way!" was shouted by the man in office, and echoed with endless variations by those who wished her ladyship out of the way.

"Lady Black-hill's carriage stops the way!"

cried one ; “ Lady Black-eye’s carriage stops the way ! ” hollowed out a second ; “ Lady Blink-eye’s carriage ! ” roared wag the third, just as her ladyship was about to chide and hasten “ dear Helen : ” she took the hint, said nothing, and her kind forbearance was rewarded by reaching the carriage as it was on the point of driving off.

“ By your leave, your honour,” said a link-boy to Mowbray, who continued to watch the departing carriage as we gaze on the sky though the sun be down ; “ by your *leaf*, this vay, my lord ; ” and, to avoid the contamination of a tarry hand, or burning link, he turned towards the doors he had just passed.

“ Please your honor, remember the link-boy ! ” said one of those imps, whose torches had danced attendance as he led Lady Helen Fawndove to the carriage.

“ It *vant* he, my lord,” said a second ; “ a small sixpence between *h’us*,” cried a third.

“ And wasn’t I, plaze your honar’s right honorable lordship ? ” said a fourth, who jostled the others, and spoke with a smack of the brogue ; “ and wasn’t it I who saved her

elegant trotters from drowning? and there, by my sowl, is the puddle," pointing to a large hole in the pavement, "only the devil a drop of water is left!" which last sentence was added to qualify the slight mistake he had made.

"Take that, and begone; if you're as dry as the puddle, you can't do with less," said Mowbray, amused by the rascal's readiness, and throwing a harvest of silver, which dazzled the poor boy from the land of potatoes. Nothing makes a man so generous as love, when its course runs smooth.

"Your cloak, sar!" said François, singling out his master as he re-entered the house.

"Can you get the carriage up?"

"Yes, sar, *parfaitement*."

"Do so, immediately."

"Do you *throw* down de *gentleman*, sar, we picked up — Mr. Boltedeville?"

"True, I forgot, I will return directly;" and Mowbray once more entered the press-room to search for his friend Boltville; once more he was obliged to be himself; that is, the worldly self.

Mothers met him with their studied kindest

smiles, and he repaid them in their coin ; many a fair daughter smiled with the heart's sincerity, but received in return the base currency of polished politeness. He was not heartless, but he could offer no more, he had no treasures to divide ; to one fair being he had devoted all that was pure and sterling, in the warmest heart that ever beat beneath the bright cuirass of fashion ; she was absent, and he felt it was torture to remain and play his part. Boltville was quickly found, and Mowbray pleaded a convenient headach, taken, no doubt, from Lady Blankisle's, in whose box he had remained so long.

“ And my cloak, too ; you were not in earnest ? ” asked the good-tempered Boltville, as he was about to step into Mowbray's carriage.

“ Your wardrobe, if you will ; I dare say the carriage will hold it,” said Mowbray, with a smile, and feeling as liberal to his friend as he had been to the link-boys. François closed the doors, and the coachman was ordered to set down at the Duke of Freestone's.

François took the hint, tried to correct his

“*von leetel* mistake,” instead of throwing down the gentleman they had picked up, he ordered the coachman to “*sit* down at Freestone House.”

Separated from the busy scene which Mowbray had just quitted, he almost hid himself in his cloak to live in a world of his own, and wander in the beautiful paths of the heart’s imagining : this, however, was little suited to the taste of the ever-laughing Boltville ; and, after a most unsocial pause, he ventured to break silence by saying to Mowbray,—

“ How devilish stupid you are to-night ! ”

“ Sympathy,” was the short reply.

“ Nonsense is better than nothing ; so, out of sympathy, let me hear you say something. What is the matter ? ”

“ Headach,” answered Mowbray ; and, pressing his hand to his brow, he muffled himself up in the corner more doggedly than ever.

There was another and a longer pause ; at length, as if Boltville had associated this sudden illness with the beautiful creature who

had engrossed Mowbray's attentions for the evening, he said,—

“How well Lady Helen Fawndove looked!”

No answer.

“She is certainly very beautiful: her eyes are always magnificent, but they were splendid to-night.”

No notice.

“Don't you think they were, Mowbray?” said Boltville, bent upon getting an answer.

“No!”

“And you do not admire them?” asked the persevering Boltville.

“No, I don't; I hate your little ‘eyes of most unholy blue.’”

“Why, Mowbray, her mother's are blue, or gray, or green; but Lady Helen's are large and black as your own: I could worship them myself!”

“I told you,” said Mowbray, angered by the seeming profanation of a theme he held so sacred, and fairly roused from his solitary wanderings — “I told you I had a headach; and I tell you now, if we talk we shall fight,

and, as I have no pistols at hand, the coloured eyes you admire so much may be transferred to yourself. You don't forget Eton, and my battle with Coleridge?—pray let me rest in peace.”

Boltville complied with the request, and not a word passed until Mowbray returned Boltville's kind “good bye,” and added, “sick men are always cross, so, forgive me to-night, and to-morrow I will forgive the mouth's quarantine. Dine with me at seven, if not better engaged.”

Boltville rarely took offence, and never when words were coupled with a good offer; shaking Mowbray's hand with warmth, he accepted this invitation, and left his friend to dream within a world of his own, without fear of interruption.

CHAPTER XI.

THE COMFORTS OF A TEA-KETTLE; OR, LAKE
LEMAN AND LA BISE DE LA SUISSE.

It is so natural to recommend what we like, and prescribe to others that which agrees with ourselves, that we are certain, had we followed the profession of medicine, we should have advised the singing of a tea-kettle as the best of opiates.

To our ear there is nothing so soothing when stretched upon the restless, fevered bed of sickness. How often in the solemn stillness of the night, when, wearied and worn, even a mother's eye was locked in that slumber she had implored for us, how often have we gently withdrawn our curtain to gaze on that humble, yet honoured, machine! how gratefully have we listened to the low soft murmur of its dying notes! how intently have we

watched the rising steam, which fled like a departing spirit, and, escaping from a neck of swanlike curve, recalled the fable of that bird whose parting breath is melody!

We would not the reader should imagine we are jesting; still less would we wish that amiable person to make the experiment at the cost of his health: Heaven forbid! Health is a gift, a mercy, a blessing, for the loss of which the music of the spheres, all the kettles in the world, could make no adequate return; but the trial may be made by us bachelors, at least, when cozing in solitude by the winter's hearth — when wearied in mind and body by the toils of the day — we turn from the tea-table, stretch our limbs on the low reclining chair, and revel in dreamy happiness beside our fire. Neither would we, for worlds, that our readers thought there was meanness, vulgarity, or absurdity, in the original notion. If we have not the privilege of appending M.D. to our name, we rank amongst our friends many who do — men who, rising above the humbug of profession, would confess there was as much sense in our prescription as in

many they are obliged to write—men who know that, to excel, they must study mankind as deeply as the *materia medica*; who feel that, “to minister to a mind diseased,” to arrest the canker of dead or withering hope, to lull the spirit of a mind too deeply wrought, to heal the sorrows or relieve the burden of affliction, are trials in their art which depend but little upon the nostrums they prescribe.

Might we not turn to the homœopathic system, quote but a tithe of its miracles, and say, without felony of punning, how little depends upon the size of a pill, or the quantity of phials!

There is more, much more, in the mysterious signs of the recipe, cloaked as it is in the hidden depths of dog-Latin: the time must come when this mummerly will be dropped; but, in spite of the railroad of intellect, the world is not yet sufficiently enlightened to look upon the truth in characters of common sense, or read it in plain and simple English; this being the case, we shall subjoin our recipe in such orthodox form as will, no doubt, make it quite as effectual as the prescriptions

of thousands with certificates from the Surgeon's Royal College, or Apothecary's Hall ; it is as follows : —

R Aq. puræ, ℥xiiij.

Gratum cum hobbum,

Kettle copperum, vel tinnum, } aa j.

Pone thrustum, date stirrum, *quant. suff.*

Horâ decubitûs vel vesper, sumendus per aures,
et repetendus, si nervus, omni everi nocte.

The beauty and value of the above consists in its simplicity — most nurses can make it up, as they would a fire, without the aid of a blundering apprentice ; and, in case these ingredients should be wanting, we proceed to give a substitute often at hand, and one which has fallen like music on our ears while penning the preceding chapter.

The Opera House, well filled, is one of the most splendid sights which our capital can boast ; it is the focus of aristocracy, of the highest and loveliest in the land ; it is a bright and fairy kingdom, devoted to pleasure, and

wherein sickness and sorrow should be forbidden guests.

And is it not so? Alas! where, alas! is the spot on earth which does not prove that pleasure is a phantom? Where does she build her palace, and hold her courts, to which misery is a stranger? Nowhere. And even while, in imagination, we were retracing the scenes which once we haunted as the votary of pleasure, the cold and chilling blast was playing through the casement of our window, and with the melancholy cadence of the Æolian harp, singing the dirge of winter; and yet its voice was harmony, its music soothing to our ear; nay, we know not whether the substitute we have named, has not a charm which beats the lullaby of a tea-kettle, at least upon paper.

To keep to the fact, while painting Melton de Mowbray as we knew him in the holiday of youth; the icy and cutting *bise* of Switzerland swept over Geneva's frozen lake, and made the rushing waters of the Rhone look doubly blue with cold.

This wind, like the sand of the desert, penetrates the closest joint ; it laughed to scorn our double windows, our outworks, and defences ; it defied great Louis Philippe himself, and said, in its swift, resistless course, “ Never shall the land of mountain and flood be *hermetically sealed*.” When the mighty utter their stormy resolves, they generally speak with the depth of mournful pathos ; such was the voice which fell upon our ear while describing a scene where all, from woman’s eye to the lamps on the stage, seemed bright and dazzling. Such is still the lengthened, ceaseless dirge, which sounds in harmony to-day as it did but yesterday, though we still are telling of Mowbray’s happiness, and confess that, if ever man was blessed, such was Melton de Mowbray on that auspicious night. Like the first warm kiss of love confessed, which lingers as a cherub on the lips, so did the light pressure of Lady Helen’s hand rest within the hand of him who longed to press it to his lips. The sunset of her parting look was engraved upon his memory, and he basked in the warmth of its glorious beauty. François was dismissed,

Mowbray needed nothing but the luxury of solitude ; his thoughts were but the dream of happiness ; and, as still wrapped in his sable cloak, and reclining on his couch, he sank to sleep, sleep itself was a continuation of the dreams he had dreamt ere the eyes were closed ; and yet, this mournful melody is music to our ears.

How is this ? is it that the cloud of Mowbray's future destiny hangs over our memory while anxious to paint the promise of his youth ? is it that we struggle in vain to think only of what he was, to speak as one endowed with the riches of mind, person, and the world ; and now, above all, rich in the promises of hope, in the visions of devoted love ? It may be so : the knowledge of the future is mercifully withheld from man ; and, it may be, our insight of coming events has tuned the mournful winds in sad accordance with the knowledge we possess, and mingled some chords of melancholy with scenes which we wished to have been sparkling, gay, and bright as the cup of youth : or is it — can it be, that there is yet a deeper spell which has cast its influence around our thoughts — a holier incantation which has

bound us in its magic while we wrote of revelry and love? We almost think that it must be so. These are no common notes of sorrow which now are borne upon the gale; it is not the mere spirit of the fallen leaves which mourn the loss of summer, and warn us of mortality; it is the voice of the departed great — the breathings of the mighty mind — of that immortal genius which lingers here, and hallows the spot where once the body sojourned, in which its lamp was fed; this it is that mingles with the mournful wind which sweeps Leman; it is the troubled spirit of the dead which rises from the grave; they look from their rest, and claim the funeral dirge which wails for the departing year; they are shrouded in the winds, and wander on the bosom of the lake, round which they sought to dwell in peace. Such, at least, we imagine to be the truth; what else can account for touches of sadness — for the feelings of solemnity amidst the gay scenes of London fashionable life — within an Italian opera house? What but *la bise*, which penetrates every

where, and has reached our hearts at such a time and place?

The question, however, is not so easily answered. The fairy spirits which strike the chord of feeling dwell in the heart's invisible recess; they are wild, capricious as the freaks of fancy. We know not when to expect their touch, but often feel it when expected least. For ourselves, we are the merriest dog in Christendom—at least were intended to be so; but who shall account for the gambols of these spirits, which play round the heart, and sometimes make us sad in spite of ourselves? who shall account for the deep, sad baying of the hound, which gazes on the moon, and upbraids, with piteous yells, that gentle light which sheds a holy calm on all beside? who shall say why the witchery of music, which tames the huge elephant, and charms the venomed snake to listen like a child, falls like discord on the selfsame hound? These are the hidden workings, whose effect we sometimes see, but rarely trace the spring which gave them life.

We, however — meaning ourselves — can

understand the misery of the poor hound in the case of music, if we cannot define the cause. We have expressed our conviction that we were intended to be a merry dog ; we doat upon music ; but, at a public dinner, where the great of England are wont to congregate, we could yell like the suffering hound the moment some attendant band strikes up its finest airs. We feel wretched we know not why, yet beyond description. The gastric juices take alarm, and, however well we may go through the honours of the table, there is no digestion for the day—we are sick at heart.

But whither have we journeyed on the wings of *la bise* ? We have distanced railroads and balloons ; one moment we travelled to the moon—the next we laughed at the “ *blocus hermetique* ” of Louis Philippe ; crossed the channel, and sat in the hall of the guzzling goldsmiths with Wellington and Co., who honoured their turtle. But our wanderings must cease ; we must return to our hero, and bid him awake from his dream of happiness. A little while, and he must bid adieu to scenes wherein he had dwelt from

infancy—must part from the dawning images of perfect bliss, to face the stern and dark realities of life.

And what is life? Is it not like the chapter we have written? the antipodes of all we hoped for and intended? the reverse of all our minds had planned? We sat down, determined to pursue the fortunes of poor Mowbray; and, anon, we were borne on the wings of the wind. “All is vanity,” are the words which are given to Solomon, when summing up the records of earthly hopes. But are the monarch’s words correctly given? Did he not mean to say, “All is uncertainty.” What else, alas! is life? We start for the east, and are driven to the west; we resolve on rest, and are whirled into motion; we intend to be good, and sin; we decide upon sin, and are saved. A stone can throw the winning horse, an atom blind the eagle’s eye. Life is the sport of chance, or, rather, the fulfilment of a written law; for nothing ordained in heaven is chance. With man, blind mortal man, from the building of Babel to the penning of a chapter—all is uncertainty!

CHAPTER XII.

THE PROVOKING NECESSITY OF HAVING PARENTS
—ITS CONSEQUENCES—THE ONLY DAUGHTER.

“ Full many lords and knights her loved,
Yet she to none of them her liking lent.”

SPENSER.

Who are they? whence do they come? where do they live? her maiden name? his father's? with all the various forms of whys, whats, and hows, are the natural result of an introduction to strangers. Instead of starting with the birth and parentage of our *dramatis personæ*, we have exhibited our principal characters on the stage of life, and left our readers to indulge their surmises on each from the scenes in which they have appeared. In the course of our

future pages divers others may appear, but they will

“ Like spirits come, and so depart — ”

a sort of *corps de ballet* to relieve the principal actors who figure in our tale.

Our *prima donna*, our first-rate performers, are already presented in name or person ; and, ere we proceed further, it may be as well to gratify that curiosity which prompts us to ask whether our new acquaintance are “ somebodies,” or “ nobodies ? ”

Gallantry and inclination lead us to begin with our heroine, our *prima donna*, the lovely Lady Helen Fawndove. Much as we reverence the respect due to age, there is a charm in the deep mysterious beauty of Lady Helen's eyes which subverts the written order of propriety : we can think of nothing else. Such are our mortal wishes, the bias of our frail and human weakness. But the reader wrongs us, if he think that we never make a good resolution : nay, in this very instance we

had done so ; in this instance, as in others, we even return to it from that best of preservatives — necessity.

However heavenly were the charms of Lady Helen, she was, like her illustrious namesake, “ of mortal born.” She could not so much as claim the privilege of our mother Eve, whose parents centred in a rib. She had both a father and mother, two distinct and necessary personages, without whose immediate presence we cannot arrive at our heroine. To them, therefore, from necessity, we give the preference.

The Marquess of Blankisle, a weak, handsome, harmless man ; a gentleman by birth, manners, and education ; one whom poor Savage (ere the elasticity of his spirits died beneath the weight of his mother’s bitter and unnatural hatred) would have described as—

“ The tenth portrayer of a foolish face.”

His father had added the vice of gambling to the foibles of a family, fallen and degenerated from the original stock. When the present

marquess came of age, his kind and easy nature was easily prevailed upon to join in cutting off the entail of large estates, which, hitherto, had amply supported the stately splendour of the family, and supplied the means of portioning its younger branches. In consequence of this, when the present marquess came to the title, he had barely enough to continue the state of his ancestors. Fortunately, he had only a daughter.

His wife, the marchioness, was the daughter of a clergyman: her father, the younger son of a noble family, obtained, through interest, most excellent preferment, but lived as parsons were wont to do in those days; that is to say, he spent his income, if not something beyond; he drank deep with the country squires; was hospitable to overflowing; and broke his neck in a fox-chase at the age of forty. His widow, also of good family, and nothing more substantial, was left with six daughters to struggle against the world and poverty.

The rich and titled great, even if kindly inclined, have too many claims upon their

purse to leave more than a niggardly assistance to poor relations. To keep to our heroine's mother : — she received a good education, and improved those abilities which nature had fortunately bestowed. This was one great step to independence ; and, as she had been early taught to look to her own exertions, her mind was accustomed to that most difficult and painful of trials,—the situation of governess.

What tales of touching misery and meek endurance might be given to the world in the annals of the governess !—what but the faith of a Christian, the sense of fulfilling a duty in the path to which it has pleased the All-wise to call them — what but this can support the fair martyrs under the tortures they too often endure ? Yes ; but too often they support the worst of torture, that of the mind of intellect subject to the caprice of ignorance ; of the feelings of the lady insulted by vulgarity ; of the poor, accomplished, struggling orphan, scorned as a menial by the purse-proud holder of new-formed wealth. To such trial, to such torture, had Lady Blankisle been

once exposed ; and, if the recollection of those days of poverty and suffering clung to her memory with painful fidelity, such thoughts may plead, in some degree, for the manœuvrer in after years, for the mother who knew that her beautiful daughter was portionless. Lady Blankisle, however — we purposely omit her maiden name — was shortly relieved from the purgatory to which the well-meant exertions of her relations had condemned her. Lady —, a distant relation on her father's side, was doubly widowed by the loss of an only daughter. She was an elderly person, mixing in the best, though not, perhaps, the gayest society ; she was desolate and alone ; she felt the need of companionship ; and the future Lady Blankisle supplied the place once occupied by her daughter. In such a home the salary was of little importance ; yet it was liberal in the extreme. The governess was transformed into a companion, and received at once the respect due to her talents, acquirements, and birth.

This change was, comparatively speaking, an earthly Paradise ; and, as trials not

only prepare us for a future world, but also enhance the value of happiness in this, Lady Blankisle's previous misery made her doubly grateful for the peaceful haven she had found. She was "a companion," it was true, but on the equality of mother and daughter. There was nothing of that humiliating degradation which sometimes makes "the companion" state more purgatorial, if it be possible, than that of "governess." Lady Blankisle was never submitted to the penance of toadeating; not so much as a bright green frog was ever forced down her throat, *à la Française*—no, not even in its primitive form of a delicate tadpole. Happy! thrice happy exemption! will say the present generation, who have witnessed Liston's immortal horror at the notion of a toadeater; or seen the face of the toadeater herself, drawn by George Cruikshank, as, seated opposite to her lady patroness, she holds the toad upon her fork, and looks upon the mouthful with deeper anguish than child ever eyed a black-dose, which must be swallowed: of both may be said, "We shall never see the like again;" but, having

seen one, or both, the reader can be at no loss to understand Lady Blankisle's delight at passing from purgatory to paradise.

It was under the kindly roof of this protectress that the Marquess of Blankisle first saw his present wife, and was at once captivated by such "slight" beauty as she then possessed ; but still more by the influence which intellect is prone to exert over those who are somewhat deficient in that useful commodity.

In a very proper course of time the question was proposed, and the marquess accepted. Then came the marriage, and, some eighteen months after that period, our heroine, Lady Helen Fawndove, opened her, even then magnificent, eyes to the light of heaven ; and then, as if Nature thought that one pair of such eyes were quite enough in one family, she withheld all further presents in the shape of children.

One more word ere we turn from the marchioness. If we cannot say that her ladyship's love was quite as fervent and decided as that of her lord, we have no hesitation in saying that she fulfilled, to the utmost, the duties of

a wife towards her husband, of a mother to her child ; if, as may have been seen, she gained an ascendancy over the marquess, it could scarcely be otherwise, and was it well that it was so ; if he saw with her eyes, he looked wiser than if he had used his own ; if he spoke with her thoughts, he did not talk nonsense ; and, if he judged with her judgment, he did not decide like a fool ; but if, in secret, she wore a certain masculine part of dress, she had the tact of the puppet-man,

“ Who wisely hides his wood and wire.”

No outward machinery appeared ; wherever, or whatever, was the curtain which veiled her lectures, they were strictly private : it was always, “ the marquess had decided so-and-so,” “ my lord intends this or that,” &c. ; when, in reality, she had taken upon herself to think and decide on all things. On the other hand, when the marquess spoke, albeit in the presence of his wife, he boldly used the first person singular, instead of the deferential “ we,” although we need scarcely add, that

his conscience, and indeed the world, knew tolerably well who the first person was.

Lady Blankisle, as a mother, was invariably kind to her child ; day after day she devoted hours in imparting some of the many treasures she had acquired while preparing the, may we not say, wretched means of independence ; her earliest labours, however, met their reward ; and when, indeed, is the mine of intellect wrought and the labourer unrewarded ? Never !—the treasures of the mind are the only earthly riches which none can steal. They are our companion in solitude, our relief in sorrow ; they can defy the fetters of captivity—the tyranny of man ; they are the gift of Heaven, which knows not the moth and rust of this world ; from Heaven they spring, and Heaven alone has the power to reclaim the inestimable boon.

If a slight young woman becomes a skinny old one, that is not her fault. In having painted, as we have, Lady Blankisle's graduated scale of smiles and ugliness, we feel a something like reproach ; we feel that, for Lady Helen's sake, we could love all and every

thing belonging to her, and that we might have spared the manœuvrer that reproach which in gallantry we ought to have believed impossible; but the character of one who seeks to wed her child to the fool or deformed for the base bidding of his money, is so immeasurably mean, so utterly despicable, that we could not watch the manœuvres of Lady Blankisle, and do otherwise than think her positively ugly: at no other moment did she appear so—nay, at other times, we have seen her beaming with intelligence; we have watched her as she watched the pencil of her daughter's gifted hand, or welcomed the dawning rays of rising genius, and thought her positively handsome!—So much, with us, does beauty depend upon expression. We have, with our wonted love of truth, pleaded her cause, even on the point we most condemn; we have said, that the horror of what she once endured through poverty was indelibly engraven upon her memory. Time, instead of diminishing the impression, had eaten into the characters, and rendered the record deeper. As she saw her daughter approach the age

when her own sufferings began, the past recurred with painful force, and distorted the intrinsic value of Mammon.

After saying thus much, we leave to the reader's imagination, as we would to a jury, to decide on the personal charms of the marchioness.

In thus giving to light the immediate ancestors of our heroine, we feel that virtue, as usual, has found the wisdom of its policy. When we first began this chapter, we were inclined to omit that respect which is always so justly due to age, and pass at once to Lady Helen Fawndove. Nothing, we fear, saved us from this sin of omission, but the absolute necessity of giving parents to all children born in the holy state of matrimony. And now, having properly provided a father and mother, we find that we have little, if any thing, to say of the daughter. She has spoken for herself; she is likely to speak for herself again ere these pages are closed, and, having already confessed that her beauty was such as defied description, we find that our inclination erred without a motive; or, rather, that it veiled

the truth, and led us to fancy we intended to describe our heroine, when, in truth, we merely wished to be idle, and ruminate upon her soft attractions. Yet, can we find nothing to say; not one word to support, if not justify, our intentions? Is Lady Helen Fawndove a theme on which we can ever feel at a loss? Why we have not, false traitors as we are, said a word on her disposition. She was gentle, yet firm; docile, but determined; intelligent, observant, and original; one of those beings who seem to glide through the world, like a star in the heavens, apparently calm and heedless, yet looking on all below. Her mind and penetration placed her above her fellows, and nothing escaped her silent notice. She was, to continue our simile, one who might run her appointed course, like the star, admired, but never known; rising and setting in gentleness and beauty, unruffled, unapproached, by the chaos of clashing worlds. But who shall say what passions, thoughts, and deep intensity of feeling dwell in that bright and distant world, which seems so still, unchanging, and serene? and who would have

imagined what depth of feeling, firmness, and determination, were couching in the heart of the gentle, docile Lady Helen?

Woman, for the most, like the tendril, must have a something round which to twine her affections — to cling to in life; without this she droops to earth, withers, and perishes. Some there are, a few who stand aloof like some rare and exquisite flower on the mountain, born, it may be, and content, to breathe its spring of life in lone tranquillity, yet able, should the hour arrive, to meet the coming storm; or answer, with the sweets of rising incense, the kindling rays of Italia's sun.

But the woman who thus stands apart, whose leading impulse is to dwell in peace, to yield with gentleness, and be a world within herself, must not be deemed infirm in purpose, incapable of feeling. She may pass through life and never love; she may be spared the trial of her strength; but there is a point beyond which she will never yield; there are within her heart the sleeping embers of intense and passionate affection; there needs but the storm to prove her firmness; there needs but

the rays of a bright and genial sun to kindle the incense of love, warm and imperishable. Yes ; such a woman can love but once ; she can know no second summer ; she may be wedded to another ; the flower may be gathered and worn in ignorance, selfishness, or carelessness ; her firmness may be exercised in struggling to forget, in stilling the tide and pulse which flow unseen. This may teach her to turn from the bright and touching aspirations of the minstrel ; to shun or even ridicule alike the depths of feeling traced by the mind's imagining, or bursting from the lips of glowing life. And such a being was Lady Helen Fawndove ; such, at least, she was, as known to us who raise at will the veil of hidden things, and allow the reader's eye to pierce the depths of human character. This is the power and privilege of authorship ; but, to the world, Lady Helen was ever as a beautiful mystery. Hundreds who had bowed to the fascination of her charms, would gladly have offered their all of rank or riches to read aright the meaning of her dark, expressive eyes. These were as a light, incomprehens-

ible, though worshipped with silent admiration. We would have said, they were as the orb of night, had not the evil genius of Herschel travelled from the Cape to mock the great original, and, like a lunatic, thrown his "Castor" at the moon. Shame! shame! in the madman's phantasy to people with discord, triangles, and savages, that calm and tranquil world, whose holy rays fall like balm upon the spirit of the breaking heart, and whisper the hope, "that thither shalt thou fly and be at rest."

How far Lady Helen's strength was tried, how much of the power of mind lay beneath her gentle playfulness of manner, must be reserved to future pages.

CHAPTER XIII.

JULIA SALADIN.

——— “ Oh ! she has beauty might insnare
A conqueror’s soul, and make him leave his crown
At random, to be scuffled for by slaves.”

DRYDEN.

IN satisfying the curiosity of our readers as to the “ who is he ? ” and “ what is he ? ” of Melton de Mowbray, we must request them to climb a few branches higher in the tree of genealogy. His grandfather was French, and descended in a direct line from one Marquis de Mowbray, who, in the annals of his country, distinguished himself on the plains of Agincourt, and was still more celebrated in the archives of his family.

We must imitate the public historian, and pass by the minute catalogue of “ the great de Mowbray’s ” achievements at that memorable battle ; valorous and many as they were, they could neither beat the English, nor save

him from writing their record in his blood. He died upon the battle-field, covered with wounds and glory.

We will not trouble our learned reader with any higher ascent, lest we should break down while attempting the finer branches. None but fools trace their pedigree to Adam : for our part, we have a most particular dislike to that man, not merely for the troubles which his weakness occasioned, but in a heraldic point of view ; for the vanity of reaching to the first man recoils upon the climber, and merely teaches him this humiliating fact, that he is related to all the scum, as well as the nobility of earth—the magnificence of obscurity is lost.

Descending, therefore, from the days of Agincourt, we will merely add, that the De Mowbrays continued to flourish in a noble and honourable manner down to the grandfather of our hero. They were amongst the staunch and personal friends of Henri Quatre and the illustrious Sully, and both the friends and connexions of the noble house of D'Aubigny ; they followed the fortunes of their royal protestant master, and, not having a

crown at stake, they never turned apostate, and deserted that creed for which they had fought, bled, and conquered.

The same consistency, the same unflinching spirit, led our hero's grandfather to prefer ruin, poverty, and exile, to the reproaches of a guilty conscience. On the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, he sacrificed his estates, honours, and country, in the cause of religion. Kings, they say, have no conscience. Eustace de Mowbray had. Henry the Fourth turned Papist for a kingdom; Eustace de Mowbray turned beggar for that which is worth more than all kingdoms in the world—a clear conscience.

In company with hundreds of his honest countrymen he sought the shores of England, and found the hospitality he so greatly needed. With that elasticity of spirit so remarkable in Frenchmen, he strove to master his regret for *la belle France*, his dear Normandy, the princely château of his ancestors, and turn his abilities to the support of his exiled family.

Amongst the bankers of that period, there were many who nobly aided these persecuted Christians; the more so, probably, from the

many foreign connexions which then existed amongst the more eminent banking-houses. In the street to which the Lombards have bequeathed their name, there lived one D'Aubigny, the principal in a wealthy firm, who claimed to be distantly connexed with Eustace de Mowbray, and who not only succoured his relative, but generously resigned in favour of the noble exile a portion of that share which he held as senior partner in the house of Messrs. D'Aubigny and Co.

Eustace de Mowbray became a banker, dropped his title, and, notwithstanding the high polish of the old school, he contrived to make an excellent man of business.

To come to our hero as rapidly as possible, we merely say, that of three sons, who, together with a broken-hearted wife, had accompanied the flight of Eustace de Mowbray, the two younger died young, and the elder (John) was early initiated into the mysteries of book-keeping and interest.

We must not, however, omit one very important fact — namely, that the Mr. D'Aubigny, who had thus generously succoured his distant relations, died, as he had lived, an old

bachelor ; indeed, so long had he born this brief prenomén, that it almost seemed as if he never could have been young. He survived the relation he had converted from a French marquis to a London banker, and to whom he had bequeathed the bulk of his wealth. It was a troublesome thing to live so long, and have so much money ; he had, therefore, to rewrite his will, and testify in favour of John de Mowbray, the only son of the departed Eustace. Then, again, Master John became a man, and took unto himself a wife (of this hereafter) ; and then came our hero into the world, as if on purpose to give more trouble to the old bachelor before he left the world. A third time the will was altered ; and while the bulk of the bachelor's fortune was given to the father of Melton, a quiet five thousand per annum was mentioned as a little *cadeau* for the son. At length, as if to destroy some growing doubts on the wise saying of some ancient philosopher, “ that not one in a million lives for ever,” the very old bachelor was gathered to his fathers, and spared all further trouble in the alteration of his will.

The name of the firm was continued,

though, as in some instances of the present day, it was nothing but a name. Mr. John de Mowbray was the living head ; and, what with the riches he had inherited, and his continued profits, he soon obtained the reputation of being the wealthiest man in the city of London.

However agreeable such fame may be, especially when founded in truth, it was not sufficient to the pride of a De Mowbray ; a something of the high ambition of his ancestors struggled into life, amidst the din and dirt of Lombard Street, and soared above the counter. John de Mowbray was not content with the dirty work of raking together pounds, shillings, and pence, he sought to spend them like a gentleman. His business—in those days, *trades* were not called *professions*—was strictly attended to ; but, with the spirit of the Florentine merchant—of the noble De Medici, who sold their silks by the yard, and patronised the fine arts by wholesale—he, the father of our hero, lived like a prince on his country estate, had one of the best houses in Grosvenor Square, and fostered genius and talent to an extent less

common at that time than the present. It happens, and not unfrequently, that men whom the world would deem unable to look into any book but a ledger, are the greatest collectors of the rarest, as well as the finest, of modern works. John de Mowbray's library was magnificent,—and well may that term be applied to his whole establishment. There seemed, in truth, but one thing wanting to make the whole complete—that jewel above all price, without which the crown of happiness is incomplete, and life, with all that wealth can purchase, but still a cheerless, solitary desert—he was, like us, alas ! a bachelor.

Without intruding our own sorrows and intentions, we proceed to say Mr. De Mowbray felt that his happiness was incomplete, and determined to seek for the one thing wanting. In a country where Mammon is worshipped as an idol, we need scarcely add that Mr. De Mowbray had been admitted to the first society : it is true that the line of demarcation between trade and aristocracy was then more rigidly preserved than now ; still, however, there were exceptions. The then honourable

office of the lord mayor of the city of London was occasionally filled by men of high connexions and noble feelings. If there were a something startling in the name of “banker,” the name of “De Mowbray” was a passport to royalty itself; indeed, it was at the particular request of the king that the proud John de Mowbray condescended to accept a baronetcy, and prefix “Sir” to his Christian name: a title which, for the future, we must not forget.

With such facilities, and backed by wealth, a fine person, and polished manners, his only difficulty was in knowing where to choose. The baronet was as much puzzled as we have been, in our day, in selecting the pattern of a lady’s robe. Sir John, as we did, saw such abundant beauty—such countless variety of attractive charms—that he was long ere he could decide. If, like us, he did not envy the Mussulman, who might have fixed on all, he ended, as we did, in selecting one most beautiful; but, wo to him! as frail as the fairy tissue of the loom.

Miss Julia Saladin, like himself, of French extraction, was lovely, talented, and accom-

plished, but poor. Her figure was commanding ; her features, mind, and bearing, haughty, ambitious, and magnificent. She seemed like one born to be great : attached to a man like Napoleon, she would have sat like a glory on his throne, or have clung to his exile like a ministering angel — enthusiastic, passionate, and wild, in her imaginings, she spurned at littleness, and seemed incapable of mediocrity. There was a poetic grandeur in her thoughts and feelings, and in the outpourings of her heart, which appeared to lift her above things of the “ earth earthy,” and marked her as one who must be either great and good ; or, passing to the other extreme, fall from her high estate. Such a being, so fearfully gifted, could only be trained to the certainty of better things, by religion, kindness, and example ; and these, unhappily, were wanting. Her mother, in many respects but too much like the daughter, had been sold by her parents to a wealthy profligate. The bonds of marriage gave the mockery of holiness to the wicked bargain, and, in a little time, served as the cloak for intrigue.

Julia Saladin was the fruit of this ill-

assorted marriage. As the parents had continued to live together in blind and happy indifference ; as no vulgar inquiries were ever made through Doctors' Commons — no disgusting details published in the daily columns to shock the modest and virtuous — they, in the end, received the reward of such considerate forbearance, and continued to be received into society until the past was buried in the putrid Lethe of forgotten scandal.

The daughter, showily but unwisely educated, was, in the course of time, introduced to the world. A something of the better feelings of the mother, of the affections of the father, were felt by the parents when they saw the admiration which their daughter obtained. Luckily for the latter, she had known little of the society of either father or mother ; their own pleasures engrossed their thoughts so fully that, except to insist upon certain outward accomplishments, they rarely interfered with the duties of a weak, though well-meaning, governess : thus, at least, she escaped the taint of evil communication, if she had not received the sacred groundwork of religious principle ; and which alone could have been

the stay of one so perilously endowed by nature.

Such was the woman who riveted the attention of Sir John de Mowbray, the moment she appeared upon the stage of fashionable life. If ever there were love at first sight, the wealthy banker might be quoted as an instance: with a picture the thing is certainly possible, and we know not why it should not be just as probable with a *chef-d'œuvre* from Nature's hand. We see at once that which we have imaged as our *beau idéal*, and should there be some flaw in the canvass, it is hidden by the ravishing exterior. Time may prove we loved unwisely, but we do not love the less for that.

Julia Saladin had no sooner entered the room where Sir John beheld her for the first time, than he followed her majestic step, gazed upon her regal beauty, and, like the devotee amidst surrounding crowds, saw but the one idol, to which he bent in adoration. He sought an introduction, and, of course, obtained it: he was received with grace and dignity, and a smile, so sweet, so fraught with high intelligence and mind, that he felt as if

all he had imaged as perfection in woman stood before him, the bright embodied reality of a visionary dream.

Such was the first impression, and such was the first reception, when Sir John de Mowbray was introduced to Miss Saladin, as an "old friend" of her father—"acquaintance" would have been a word nearer the truth, but less suited to the intentions of her mother. The baronet lost no opportunity of improving the acquaintance; every hour, every moment, added fuel to the passion which had surprised his heart, till carried away by the blind intensities of his own feelings, he declared his adoration, and demanded the hand of the proud and peerless beauty.

The declaration was somewhat premature, and most decidedly abrupt: after a pause of some moments, in which astonishment struggled with contempt, a cold and decided refusal was given. There was an awkward silence on the part of Sir John, which, however, was shortly relieved by a particularly graceful union of courtesy and bow on the part of Miss Saladin, who forthwith retired with offended dignity.

This was an untoward beginning. Sir John de Mowbray had knelt before his idol, as the stricken enthusiast who bowed to the exquisite statue in St. Peter's, and endowed the cold marble with the warmth of life; lost in his own admiration, he had forgotten to remark that his idol had neither warmth nor eyes for him; he found, however, that she had a tongue which speedily brought him to his senses, and, probably, saved him from the fate of the blind enthusiast.

Sir John saw the error he had committed; but a De Mowbray was not to be easily repulsed: wounded pride and vanity came as supporters to the deep passion of love; he made known his pretensions to her parents; no art nor persuasion were spared on their part, but all in vain. Neither the portionless state to which she was reduced by her father's extravagances, nor the splendour of proffered endowment, could shake her resolution. For herself, she spurned the bribe; but, in the end, she made the highest sacrifice which woman can offer, and, to save her parents from a jail, surrendered her hand to the man she could not love.

It was within the compass of her high enthusiastic mind to do thus much, and she was worthy of a better fate, for she did more than this, she struggled to fulfil the duties of wife to him whose very love was misery to her. But the sins of the heartless parents visited the child; the tale of utter ruin—of the cheerless prison—was coined to work upon her feelings. Some babbling tongue had revealed the plot, and slandered her husband as being privy to the scheme: the same voice whispered that she had been sold, and pointed to the gifts profusely lavished on her parents as the confirmation of the fact.

What is there more galling to a noble mind than to find that our feelings have been duped, our sacrifices given to fraud and imposition? If Lady de Mowbray had found it difficult to conquer an indifference which almost made her shrink from her husband's touch, she now found it impossible to shroud the loathing she felt for one whom she despised as deeply as she hated. Kindness, generosity, and affection, from the blind and doating husband, were rejected as part of the means which had been used to betray her. Sir John

saw with agony the sudden change, the destruction of hopes which had been strengthened with time. Conscious how little he deserved such cold return, he was too proud to seek for explanation ; and she, on the other hand, conscious of how great a sacrifice she had made, was too proud to complain when she deemed atonement impossible.

Such was the state of parties when Lady de Mowbray was unexpectedly thrown into the society of one to whom she had pledged the young affections of her heart. An estate, on which the family of the De la Beres occasionally resided, adjoined one where the younger days of Lady de Mowbray were passed with her governess, and where William de la Bere, then a younger brother, first met with Julia Saladin.

As the Brahmins attribute to the dim recollections of a pre-existent state the joys of memory which mingle with the present delight of hearing music for the first time, so met William de la Bere and Julia Saladin. It seemed as if they must have known each other before, though they could not deny the fact,

that, in their present forms, they had never seen each other till then. It was their first meeting, but they felt not as strangers; they understood each other, as it were, by intuition: and as, in their innocence, they yielded at once to the intoxicating bliss of hearts in harmony, they felt as if their spirits had ever dwelt together, and now poured forth pre-existing thoughts, and renewed, as it were, the intercourse which had never ceased to be.

Julia Saladin was then scarcely more than sixteen, William de la Bere some few years her senior; the governess, kind-hearted, but weak in the knowledge of the world, was by no means sorry to have found a protector and companion in her rambles with her pupil, and the pupil was never sorry when the governess was persuaded to rest her limbs while she and William de la Bere just went to see this point of view, just scrambled up that hill, or explored a ruin here; and nature's endless beauties here, there, and every where.

Happy, happy days! when a mind like that of Julia Saladin could pour forth its high and wild imaginings to one who felt

with her feelings, and walked in the spirit of her thoughts! How oft, while the governess sipped her tea, called for candles in a summer night, and conned the earthy chit-chat of this lower world—how oft would they desert the library, which opened to the garden, and worship in silence that Almighty Spirit which had starred the heavens with its countless worlds. Wonderful, wonderful! was written in their meeting glance; and then, with the wings of immortality, they would soar aloft and people the worlds they looked upon, dream of some bright planet where they must have lived or loved ere they met on earth, and think of one wherein their souls would meet to part no more.

At other times, their thoughts were more of this world; but, oh, how far above the grosser herd of worldly musings! With the bright enthusiasm of a pure, yet daring mind, Julia Saladin would sketch some career of proud ambition for him whose soul seemed linked to hers. Was not their thread of life, of all things, woven into one? His glory would be hers; his greatness, as the air they breathed together: it would be but one hand

which would work out the weal of millions ; one reward would await them ; both here and hereafter, they would for ever be united.

Fond, foolish, happy dreamers ! blessed in blindness—pure, exalted in their wishes—little did they think how rudely their eyes would be opened to the standard of the world. For nearly three years, with short intervals, between which seemed an age, this communing continued. That the rites of the church were to unite them after its written form, was understood ; but we know not how to trace the steps which led to such understanding, declarations, and acknowledgments. After the manner of the many, would serve to them as nothing ; they loved from the moment of their meeting, but in silence they confessed the enchanter's wand. No eloquence of words, no pleadings, no protestations, urged the passion of the man ; no language of the lips answered for the woman ; they loved as if their hearts had been pledged in some brighter sphere ; as if their love, like their harmony of thoughts, had existed from eternity. It was a beautiful sight to see two such beings tread their flowery path in exquisite and according bliss. No

doubts, no misgivings, nothing of the littleness of things below chequered their union, or shadowed the hopes they built; it was a phantasy to bless the spirits of the pure which hover above, and watch our steps; a vision to cheat them to the thought that perfection and happiness could dwell on earth. Great was the surprise of these romantic, but high-minded creatures, when, anxious to crown their future with reality, they pleaded, for the first time, the passion they felt, and sought the blessing and approval of a parent's voice: a stern and haughty refusal was pronounced on the part of Mr. and Mrs. Saladin. What pretensions had William de la Bere? what means to support the woman he thus adored? The briefless barrister of to-day, who might, or might not, be lord chancellor hereafter, was repulsed with mockery, insult, and reproach.

Julia Saladin was hurried by her parents from the neighbourhood, and strictly watched by a mother's eye until she was introduced in public,—an event which, in those days, did not occur quite so early as in the present. We have hinted at one of the arts employed

in persuading Julia to accept the hand of Sir John de Mowbray ; others, equally false and mean, were resorted to. We pass them, in painful disgust, with the mere allusion to such reports as were inserted in the daily papers, and which set forth with, of course, " We hear from good authority," that William de la Bere, Esq. was about to lead such and such heiress to the altar. At that time, Miss Saladin was herself so far above deceit, that the idea of being cheated by a parent was, to her ingenuous mind, an impossibility : it was not until after she was Lady de Mowbray that she learnt the truth.

Scarcely had she assumed that title, and sealed her fate, than William de la Bere succeeded to the family estates by the sudden death of his elder brother. Once more the two who had, far from the haunts of man, pledged their passionate affections, now met in the haunts of fashion. One look told Lady de Mowbray how deeply she had been deceived, and how false had been the rumours which had wronged the constancy of William de la Bere. The interval since last they met,

the torture, changes — all that had occurred, or been endured, seemed lost, and absorbed in the penetrating glance of that one meeting look.

It were hard to say whether there were more of misery or happiness in that hour of trial. If, for an instant, the past arose in all its purity and force, there were no reproaches against her whose decision had made the future blank ; none against him who had been deemed a deserter ; the truth was read, all was forgiven, all was forgotten, but one ecstatic joy — that they had met again. They stood beside each other, their hands were clasped, but oh, how chilly cold and deathlike was the touch ! it struck like ice upon the throbbing heart, and told that hope was dead. One look of agony passed between them ; speechless, tearless, they gazed for a few brief moments, then turned aside to meet no more that night.

We must conclude : on the morrow they met again ; again on the morrow, and the morrow. We pass the struggles, the conflicts which battled within the breast of William de la Bere : they ended in the mastery of a

noble mind; he fled from the lures he could not look upon in innocence, and left, without spot or blemish, the woman he had idolised as perfect.

The parting, like the meeting, was in silence. Mr. De la Bere would have deemed it a pollution to whisper one word of feelings he could not conquer; "Better she should deem me unkind," he said, within himself, "than listen to one word an angel might not hear."

He thought and spoke with that calm enthusiastic love which, like the sun which purifies the wax it softens, delights in deifying the heart it warms: he would that Lady de Mowbray should be all that he knew she might have been. If she were not happy, she might be great, good, and unblemished in her misery; but, alas! the lover's dream is but too like the poet's, — it is not for this world. Lady de Mowbray was wanting in the strength of those religious principles which teach endurance, and support a woman in the path of cheerless duty: the bent of her disposition was towards heaven, but the passions which drag us down

to earth were scattered in her heart like seeds of the thistle and the tare; and there was none to sit and watch upon their rising growth.

It is only to the ear of woman that man ever ventures to lay bare the deep pulsations of his heart; and pours forth the dreamy goodness, the gentleness, as well as grandeur of his mind. The vivid and romantic imagination of William de la Bere appeared to invest the themes he touched upon with a purer atmosphere and light; they were lifted from the earth, and rose with the wings of the morning; there was a soaring nobility of thought in all he uttered, which led insensibly to the standard of perfection.

Lady de Mowbray listened, and felt that his words fell like balm upon the angry passions, which had risen in rebellion; the feelings of scorn, if not of hatred, against her parents and husband, were lulled to rest: she felt that she could submit with resignation, and almost forgive the authors of her wretchedness; she drank the honied cup, nor dreamt that there was poison in the dregs. The winds were

hushed ; the stream of life was tranquil as the mirror ; the clouds above, the ruins on its bank, the mournful cypress, the drooping willow, the sweet floweret with its star of blue — all things beautiful, if sad, — were reflected there with bright, if melancholy, truth : and, as she listened to the voice which had wrought this perilous calm, she heeded not the lowering storm, nor heard the thunder of the cataract to which her bark was gliding.

And thus it is that woman, trusting to herself, falls in the silken meshes of a passion, which, in its birth and growth, is immeasurably raised above the grosser love of man. Lady de Mowbray deemed herself secure ; she saw the barrier placed between herself and the man whom she once so passionately loved, and felt it as impassable : she turned to the regions of romance in which her youth began, revived the certainty of happier spheres, and was content to think of this world as one of trial : she believed that to meet, to see, to listen to William de la Bere in the sacred character of *friend*, was all she could desire ; this alone was such exquisite happiness, such

ample reward for the perseverance in duty, that she imagined she could never be tempted to pass those pure and exalted sentiments which are cradled in the infancy of woman's love.

It matters not what chance or moment awoke William de la Bere to a sense of danger — his resolution was taken ; and, without trusting himself to that sad word which has betrayed so many at parting, he resolved to meet no more ; and breathed his “farewell” in a prayer for the happiness of her he left to save.

A more worldly course — some warning of the coming storm — some few kind words to break the sentence and shew its wisdom, might, perhaps, have saved one capable of high-minded resolves ; but, alas ! a thing of passions — we have only to relate facts as they occurred, and draw this lengthened chapter to a close.

The absence of William de la Bere ought to have revealed to Lady de Mowbray the true state of her feelings, but the powers of reflection were paralysed by the anguish of her

mind. At the accustomed hour of Mr. De la Bere's visits, she listened with breathless anxiety for the well-known knock, the steps of him,

“ Whose verra foot had music in't
As he came up the stair.”

Some stranger was announced; the dry and fevered tongue could scarcely aid the utterance, and the forms of politeness died in the attempt to pass the throat. Who is there that has not looked intensely for the arrival of some one whose welcome smile is as the light we live in? Who has not listened to the wheels which sounded afar, approached, and passed? Who has not looked for the form known amidst the myriads which come and go, and trembled as the postman thundered his double knock, as if it were the herald which proclaimed the fiat of our destiny? These are amongst the homely realities of life, but yet, how laden with agony and suffering! Whether we ourselves have drawn down an avenging wrath, or been chastened by misfortune, there are few who have

not known such trials, and few who cannot understand Lady de Mowbray's feelings of dread suspense.

A few days closed the interval of time which suffering had lengthened into years. A letter, bearing the Dublin post-mark, announced the necessity of Mr. De la Bere visiting his estate in Ireland, of his intention to remain there for the present, and, as an apology for writing, alluded to some books lent for Lady de Mowbray's perusal, and which she was requested to return to —— at her leisure: this, and some simple form of wishes for her happiness, was all the letter contained.

“ And this from De la Bere—the noble, generous, and warm!—the honoured, hallowed friend of her he once so passionately loved!” exclaimed Lady de Mowbray, who still confided in her strength, although her lips could scarcely utter the final word.

And again, as doubtful of the truth, she scanned the letters of a hand whose writing she had so often pored upon, as if fixed by the power of a talisman. They were not what they were; there seemed a tremor here, a

a stiffness there ; but the signature—she could not doubt—it was the same which she had kissed a thousand, thousand times, and worn against her spotless bosom.

“ And, can it be ? — oh, no — no — no ! he has read me unjustly ; he deems me weak and unworthy ; I am deserted, wronged, despised by him who alone might have saved me from myself ! ” exclaimed Lady de Mowbray, as she gasped for breath, and trembled beneath the violence of contending passions. “ Yes, I am deserted and despised ! ” she repeated, as she stood the image of despair, and gazed on the letter which had fallen at her feet. Till that moment the form of hope had sustained the energies of life ; but now, with the word “ despised ” upon her lips, she sank lifeless on the couch by which she stood.

Thus was Lady de Mowbray found by her servant, whose screams and smelling bottles restored animation. Her ladyship recovered, as fashionable ladies are obliged to do ; and, with a smile on the lips, and despair in the heart, she plunged into the vortex of dissipated fashion. She was not a being to hold a middle

course ; and, in the end, she fled from a home of misery with one who had revealed her parent's crime, and linked with them her husband's name as being privy to their heartless plot ; thus, alas ! proving but too well how clearly William de la Bere had seen that precipice on the brink of which he had, till then, wandered in blind security.

Little, little did he look for the reckless consequences of a measure taken to save her who had stood by his side more blindly than himself. She did, indeed, awake ; her eyes were opened ; but, with the dizziness of frenzied madness, she cast herself within the gulf which was yawning at her feet.

One moment's self-possession, one brief prayer to Him whose hand is ever ready to save the erring who repent, and she might have never fallen ; but these were wanting : and it was not until after years of suffering and wretchedness, that she learnt to value the decision of him who had fled from her presence ; and not till then, came the full conviction of the bitter struggles which it had cost him to pen the words of cold indifference.

CHAPTER XIV.

WILLIAM, THE LAST OF THE DE LA BERES ; AND
THE MISSES PRISCILLA, MARTHA, AND
BRIDGET, HIS MAIDEN SISTERS.

“ They knew him well,
He was the brother whom they idolised ;
And when they saw his wild and passionate
Affections wrecked, they knew he would embark
No more on Cupid’s treacherous ocean.
Henceforth, with one accord they bade adieu
To hopes — to thoughts — to wishes springing from
Our earthlier passions, and bent their love —
Their pure devoted love — to win his mind
From utter wretchedness, to tend the sweets
Of woman’s gentleness, that heavenly balm
Which now might never flow from other hands than theirs.”

A. BIRD.

WILLIAM, the last of the De la Beres, has already been presented to the reader at Brookes’s, and again introduced still more intimately at his own dinner-table : this would have left us little to add, but for certain adjuncts, which,

from the result of events recorded in our last chapter, became, as it were, a part of himself. We have already mentioned that Mr. De la Bere was a younger son, and originally intended for the profession of the law; but we have not alluded to three sisters, who, in their father's opinion, required a provision for which they could not toil, and left, as usual, the younger scion to flourish by his own exertions.

Priscilla, Martha, and Bridget, were the names which distinguished the three sisters; and, if there be something of precision in the titles, it accorded better with the picture of their later days, than when they were allied to youth, beauty, talent, and accomplishment.

We have more than once felt an inclination to believe that our godfathers and godmothers have much to answer for in the names they bestow. In the course of time they receive on their part an acquittal for the sins to which they have made themselves responsible, and so far the account is justly squared; but the name — that is, the Christian name, is never changed; no, not even for a fortune; it sticks by us to the last, and, however much

it may influence our fate, we alone, who receive the badge in infancy and helplessness, must answer for all the consequences of another's act. This, we contend, is unjust, and any thing but satisfactory to many a wretch who bears an ill name from his birth.

And who will dare to say that a name does not often decide our destiny on earth? How often does it seem as if our sponsors spoke with that spirit of prophecy which brings to pass the future by its own agency? and such, we imagine, must have been the crabbed foresight of those who answered at the font for the three Misses De la Bere, and bestowed upon laughing, chubby children, rich in the promise of beauty in its bud, names appropriate to beings born to be disposed of in a nunnery, and doomed, perforce,

“ To bless the day they to that refuge ran,
Free from the marriage-chain and from that
tyrant—man.”

Whether our conjectures be right or wrong, whatever may have been the weight of predestined causes, or the responsibility of god-

papas and god-mammas, the Misses Priscilla, Martha, and Bridget, journeyed to the grave in a state of celibacy. Their charms grew with their growth, bloomed in the spring of life, flowered in its zenith, faded by degrees, withered in winter, and perished like the grass of the field: if, however, their sweets were uncultured by the hands of admiring husbands, they were not “wasted on the desert air.” The three sisters lived in the midst of society, known by the essence of their goodness, and beloved for the fruits of their warm and noble hearts.

They were each the senior to William de la Bere; the eldest, by many years. Most of us must know, or have remarked, how even a few years’ seniority give the sister’s love a tone of motherly affection towards a younger brother; never was it more strongly exemplified than in the feelings of these excellent creatures. At the time that William de la Bere first met with Julia Saladin, the sisters were living at Southam, a venerable seat of the De la Bere family, and which, by their father’s will, had been assigned for life to all

or either, in case of remaining unmarried. An aunt, who had long supplied the place of the mother they had lost, formed a part of their establishment, and, by her age, afforded that decorum which is looked for by the eye of the world, and added not a little to their domestic happiness by a cultivated mind and the sweetest of tempers.

Such was the bright and interesting group of womankind which gave the life and loveliness of home to the time-hallowed seat of the De la Beres, when William, their favourite brother, completed the circle by his presence. It was the first time he had joined their society since the death of their last remaining parent had led to the present establishment.

When the hand of death has snatched from a family the chief column of support, and obliged those to seek a shelter far from the roof under which they had dwelt from infancy, the first reunion is always a meeting of deep and touching interest: it is like the remnants of a crew whose vessel has been wrecked, and who gather together on the shore to which they have been driven. The tie which unites those

who still remain appears to be renewed with double force, and they feel, to the utmost, the value of a link which recent affliction has taught them to consider but frail and perishable. With what warmth and tenderness William de la Bere was welcomed, may be more easily imaged than described. If he had lost a father, it almost seemed as if each remaining sister were determined to mingle their characters in one, and supply the place of father and mother, by their generous and devoted love.

We have said that William was the pet of the family. Elder brothers are often (we might, perhaps, say usually) the most unamiable; their better qualities have a destroying host to contend with from the cradle: with the milk which nourishes the spark of life they imbibe the poisoned flattery of fawning menials; the doting fondness of parents; the submission of tutors, foster the growing evil the adulation of a designing world completes the mischief in the hour of manhood, and makes the elder son blind, selfish, arrogant, and ignorant—lavish as the spendthrift, or

niggard as the miser. There are, of course, exceptions; there are many who mend in after life; some who are taught by experience, others by misfortune; in some the innate good appears when "the wild oats" have been sown and gathered; but, for the most part, men born to a large inheritance, with the weakness to which we all are heirs, fall victims to the soft and infected atmosphere they breathe. They become such as we have described, and such was the heir to the De la Bere estates.

We have said thus much to account the more readily for the present affection and future devotion of those beings, whose whole remaining life seemed to be identified with that of their noble, but eccentric brother.

Nearly twelve months had elapsed since the loss of their father: the first violence of grief had passed, and the sacred recollections of him they still lamented were mixed with gratitude for the independence bequeathed at his death. They enjoyed, as he intended they should do, their appointed home—their ample means; but, to the last, they preserved the simplicity of children, and every comfort they

dispensed around, or tasted within themselves, revived the memory of that parent who had provided for their wants, and doubled their enjoyment; as if a father's blessing was on all they had, and on all they did.

It was in the afternoon of a fine summer's day that William de la Bere alighted from a lumbering heavy coach, which, by dint of great exertion, had travelled in two days from London to the small straggling town of Cheltenham.

Little remains to convey the notion of what this far-famed place was in former days, though, to use a painter's phrase, there are a few "delicious little bits" which now seem as misplaced as a wild American hut in the streets of New York: there are still some traces of the humble cottage-house which once bordered the high-road, and dignified it by the name of street; here or there you may see, or might have done so a few years since, between its upstart neighbours, a low and humble dwelling, with its casement windows and rafters bending with the weight of years, and mossy tiles.

“ Beautiful ! ” cried the enraptured Maulstick, to whom we once pointed out the relic ; “ what curves of beauty ! what glorious colouring ! those chimneys are a picture ! look at the massive beams for the projecting story ! the door-way arched ! what cracks and tints upon the plaster ! no unhallowed whitewash ! ten thousand blessings on the good conservative ! ”

We have given the words of our friend, who said and saw, perhaps, a trifle more than we could ; but his eye will enable the reader to judge of the style which prevailed at the time in which we write, without the trouble of descending within a cottage, upon which the very pavement has risen in the pride of improvement.

The arrival of the heavy machine which had conveyed our traveller to this country-town, was an event of great importance. The boot alone would have held a modern “ Comet ” or “ Dart ; ” and the unpacking of a modern “ fly-wagon ” would not have made half the buzzing and commotion caused by the diving and fishing into this leathern warehouse. After waiting and watching with angry im-

patience, William de la Bere pounced upon his trunk, and gave it to the charge of a sturdy countryman, who was to act as guide and porter to the home of his sisters. It was fortunate for the young barrister that his travelling wardrobe was light; but, from his time to the present, two or three handsful of clothes with three or four stamps of the feet, complete the equipment of an embryo judge, and make his baggage as handy as a packet of portable soup.

“ I am a quick walker—can you keep up?” asked Mr. De la Bere, as he strided across the fields, and leapt stile after stile like a greyhound.

“ Y—w—s, your honour,” said the clown, whose rosy cheeks played like a trumpeter’s after a long blast; “ but, drot it, them stiles be a poser.”

“ True, my good fellow,” said Mr. De la Bere, pausing to relieve the clodhopper of the trunk while he clambered a stile; “ I forgot that your heels and your head are both laden.”

“ As to my heels,” said the man, looking

down at his shoes, "sure-ly they be as strong as a wagon, and shoed like a donkey; but as to my head, your honour," he added, taking off his hat and scratching his flaxen locks, while he surveyed the long, powdered hair of his employer; "my head bean't so heavy as some, for I ha'n't robbed the miller's sack."

"Come! come along! I meant the trunk on your head," said Mr. De la Bere, who, in his haste, had not looked to see how his wardrobe was carried.

"Lord love your honour," cried the rustic wit, "that bean't much more than a pitchfork under my arm; Dame De la Bere's sunday gown would be more of a load."

"What, man!" exclaimed Mr. De la Bere sharply, upon hearing his whole outfit compared to his aunt's one silk dress, and forgetting that the style of his travelling, and a certain eccentricity of dress, which he even then adopted, left the countryman in doubt as to his rank. His good-nature, however, soon replaced the feeling of family pride, and he added, familiarly, "Come along, my lad, I see you're a wag."

“ If that be short for wagoner, I be, your honour ; and a pratty team I’ve got. How could your honour guess it ? What a thing it be to have the larning ! ”

With that mixture of shrewdness, simplicity, and satire, which is not unrarely found in humble life, the countryman and barrister to be, continued their chat and their march through one or two hamlets, and then over fields intersected by paths at all possible angles, and fenced by eternal stiles, whose unfeminine top-rail was generally formed by the axletree of a condemned wagon.

“ How is this ? ” asked Mr. De la Bere, pointing to the last of the many he had cleared.

“ How, your honour ? ” said the countryman, pausing for a moment to look back at the stile, and losing the arch smile of his eye ; “ why, ’tis just as how we poor folk be served when we can’t go no longer ; we be nailed down, and made fast ; and the boys, and the girls, and the sweethearts, play over our bodies, and never think nothing of what we once was.”

“ Why, Ned, my good fellow, you’d make a philosopher,” said Mr. De la Bere, with a smile.

“ May be I might, and may be I mightn’t, your honour,” replied the countryman, with continued earnestness ; “ but larning ’s fond of long words, and I can’t get um into my head. As to your honour’s outlandish ‘ *filoo’s fur*,’ I knows of no fur but the foxes’ ; and, may be, it ’s that your honour means.”

“ No ; I meant you looked grave, and seemed to be thinking ; and that makes a philosopher.”

“ Be that all, your honour ? Then there be one of your big words which fits my head ; ay, your honour,” he continued, pointing to the old axletree they had just crossed, “ many’s and many’s a weary mile I’ve a-walked by the side of that there piece of timber, and many’s a heavy load it has carried in its day ; and somehow, your honour, when I crossed my old friend with your load (though, sure enough, that bean’t very heavy,” he added by parenthesis, with a bit of a smile), “ I thought of poor father, who once was stronger than I, and

now lies in the churchyard we passed ; and when I seed your honour step over his grave like a stone in the road, I thought as how my legs must fail like the wheels of a wagon ; and how—it 's only a month come to-morrow since I laid my poor mother by the side of her old man — that 's all, your honour."

And there was an end to the wagoner's philosophy. The sudden transition of thought which awakened the recollections of his mother's death, caused a very unphilosophical fulness of the eye ; and, after his soil-clad hands had been drawn across his face, there was a track from the heel of the thumb to the end of the forefinger, which appeared to have been suddenly washed. No detergent less powerful than salt and water could, we imagine, have effected the change.

Such we take it must have been the opinion of young William de la Bere ; for, checking the dancing spirits which were bounding in his own heart, he took his trunk from the countryman, and declaring he would give a lift to Ned's team, he led the way for awhile without speaking or looking behind.

This respect to the rough but warm-hearted mourner was not lost ; but the poor cannot afford to weep long — the coarse sleeve of the countryman's smock-frock supplied the place of a cambric handkerchief. Again his eyes laughed like his own fields after a shower in April ; and, overtaking his leader with a hearty “ long life to your honour ! and God's blessing be with it ! ” he insisted upon resuming his load.

This time Ned placed the trunk on his broad shoulders, and, giving them two or three lifts as if to weigh the contents, “ Dang it ! it bean't so light, after' all. If you bees a gemmun (and I am sure you bees), I wishes they was all as like to your honour as two *banes* in a manger. For all the world, you be as grashus as one of the Deller Bere lady-folk yonder.”

CHAPTER XV.

SOUTHAM, AND THE THREE MISSES DE LA BERE
IN YOUTH AND AGE.

“ And thus and there they lived, until they seemed
The spirits of the venerable pile
Wherein they dwelt, its very life and soul.
And Time so gently set his seal upon
Their hallowed charms ; such harmony appeared
Between the spot, and those who dwelt thereon,
That it had been a sin to wish that years
Could render back the attributes of youth.”

A. BIRD.

THIS allusion of the simple-minded Ashmead —for such was Ned’s surname—to the family of De la Bere, directed the barrister’s eyes to the spot he was seeking. It was many years—many, at least, in the course he had ran—since he had trodden the path which he now pursued ; but the nearer he approached to Southam, the less he needed the assistance

of a guide. The cottages, trees, or hedges, stood forth like old acquaintances, and revived the memories of "auld lang syne." Dame this or that—poor old "crippledee" Hodge—the bent and gray-haired tillers of the soil—such mortal wrecks, which seemed to his boyhood as if they never could have been young, now rose from the grave, and sat beneath the honeysuckled porch. In that tree his Argus eye had pierced the magpie's cunning;—in this he got a tumble;—in yonder hedges he never missed a hare;—and overhead was still the unchanging kingdom of the cawing rook, to which, summer though it was, the dry bits of fallen twigs bore witness—to say nothing of the white-washed pathway which warned the passer of his peril.

William de la Bere had just emerged in safety from this short avenue of old elms, where the countless and varied roofs of Southam rose one behind another like a scattered village; first, was the house, zig-zagged like a fortified town—angles, niches, and notches without end, giving warm corners to the vine, the apricot, or pear-tree. A bay-

window, here or there, broke the straight gravel walk, and made it fall back with the precision of a shadow. Next were the nooks formed by some wide chimney backed out of the wainscotted drawing-room ; oriels looked from above, graceful and calm, amidst the confusion of porticoes, casements, doorways, and peep-holes. As to the gables and roofing, the sheet of a mad mathematician was order itself, compared to the lines which figured on Southam. Then came the outworks of butteries, kitchens, and halls ; granaries, dovecot, stabling, and barns ; in short, a colony of dependencies in one shape or other, yet, nevertheless, in harmony with the whole. The sobered stone, blending with the once red tiles which long had ceased to blush, marked the patrician's quarters ; the blackened oak, framed to symmetry, and looking from its solid walls ; the whole touched by the softened tints which time had given, made it, in spite of endless anomalies and breaks, imposing, picturesque, and worthy of a family distinguished in the conquest of England, and now living in peace and plenty on the soil they had won.

Need we wonder if the pulse of Norman blood beat with the throb of pride, as William de la Bere looked on the seat of his ancestors?

“There is the dear old place!” he exclaimed, as he looked along the verdant plain in which the venerable building stood; “and there,” turning his eyes to the right, “are the hills, the woods and rock, bright in the sunset, as it were but yesterday I climbed amongst them; and there, by all that’s glorious—there are my sisters and aunt by the corner of the old yew-tree hedge! Look, man! don’t you see them waving their handkerchiefs?” and, without waiting for a reply, which he scarcely heeded, he quickened his pace.

The honest Ashmead, however, was soon at his side; and, with his hat in his hand, and something like alarm in his face, he measured William de la Bere’s commanding figure, and said, “Why, sure your honour can never be little Master William?”

“Was once,” answered De la Bere, walking somewhat too quick for long speeches.

But Ashmead’s doubts were not to be so

easily satisfied, and he said, "Be you the little William who would ride old Blackbird to water?"

De la Bere nodded "Yes."

"And tumbled into the duck-pond?"

Another nod.

"And stuck into old Blackbird the great big spur, which the great *Willum dellur Bere* wore on his heel when he fought along with *Willum the Conkrur*?"

"The very same."

"The Lord bless your honour, and how you did make old Blackbird fling out! no wonder he kicked you and the spur into the duck-pond! Why, your honour, it was father who grabbed you up from the mud, and you comed out covered with weed, and looked as green as a drake's head!" and Ashmead could not refrain from a laugh at the recollection of an accident which he had witnessed as a boy.

"Well I remember it," said William de la Bere, joining in a laugh, which, however, was soon checked on the part of Ashmead, with many hopes "that it wan't no offence to laugh."

“None — none at all,” replied De la Bere delighted at the revival of his budding notions of chivalry and war-horses which had led to the ducking; and, worse than that, to the chastisement of his angered father, who, coming up at the moment, and hearing the particulars, swore, with no gentle oath, “Let the boy swim or drown; for, by all that is holy, he is not worth the spur that is lost!”

“You remember, my father was there?” asked Mr. De la Bere, anxious to see what impression the scene had made on his memory.

Ashmead’s face looked longer than when he dropped a tear for his mother; and, replying in an under tone, he said, “His words are whizzing in my ear, and I think I can see the general before me now; but I didn’t much care to remember that part of the story, I thought he would have killed poor father.”

“Indeed! was he angry?”

“Angry! why he banged his black charger over the wall as if it were but a cart-rut! Bob, I do mind, was as black as my grease-pot, save a white star on his forehead; but the

general's face looked a pratty sight blacker, and he swore ——”

“ Never mind what he swore, was the spur found ? ”

“ Oh, yes, your honour ! ” replied Ashmead, recovering his laughing eye ; “ poor father took to the water, and bobbed up and down like a diver : I couldn't laugh then, but I often have since, at his black head full of duck-weed, as he popped up at last with the big spur in his hand.”

“ I am afraid I was then but a wild and wicked little fellow,” said Mr. De la Bere, pleased, as we all are wont to be, in reviving the exploits of his boyish days.

“ Why, to be sure, pretty middling for that,” answered the quondam ally of “ little Master William ; ” and then, grinning from ear to ear, he said, “ does your honour remember stealing Bill's shears to dock the curly pig's tail, and make a pair of barnacles for your great aunt, old Lady Tabitha ? ”

“ No, no, Ashmead,” cried Mr. De la Bere, trying to conceal the recollection which

tickled his memory — “no, no, I think that must be a tale of your own making.”

“True, as I’m a living man!” said Ashmead, as solemnly as an historian whose word has been questioned.

As may be supposed, the waving handkerchiefs had been answered long ere these feats of boyhood were discussed, or even touched upon; and for which, by the way, the flat county had afforded ample opportunity. At length, however, the last stile was passed; the old wall, or invisible fence, which bounded the garden and rose to a level with its velvet turf and gravel walks, now became quite visible to those who approached, and the truant brother was soon within hearing.

“My dear, dear boy!” cried the sweet-tempered aunt.

“You idle truant!” cried one sister.

“You wicked deserter!” said another, “we have been watching these two hours.”

“Go round to the gate, and we will run and meet you,” said the third, “who, with the rest, while watching from the nearest point of

approach, had forgotten the moat which divided them.

“Halt! stay where you are,” cried the young De la Bere; and, retreating a few paces for the advantage of a run, he bounded across the fosse, embraced and kissed his honoured aunt, and then allowed himself to be scrambled for by his sisters, who all claimed the first privilege of smothering him with kisses.

When the shock of the first encounter had a little subsided, the lips changed the mode of attack by a thousand kind questions.

“Well, and dear, dear Willy, how have you been, and what could make you so late?”

“You are quite well, and why did you not get a horse and gallop to see us?”

“Why,” answered De la Bere, finding at length an opportunity of speaking — “why, for the best of reasons; I knew my long legs, and your short cuts, would beat any horse I could mount. You think I forget the clay roads of your county; they hold wet like canals, and horsemen take to the fields as they would to a towing-path.”

“Fie, fie, William!” said the aunt, with a

smile like a mother's, "you shall not slander our home."

"You are just as malicious as ever, and deserve to be punished," said the youngest, once more throwing her arms round her brother's neck, and stopping the slanderous mouth with her kisses.

"Indeed, William, we have mended our ways since you were here last," said Miss Priscilla, sporting a somewhat precise joke.

"Well, dearest aunt, hang all the roads and admit my defence, since here I am happy and safe. I only quoted the words of your aunt, the learned Lady Tabitha."

"And what did she say?" asked the sisters.

"She invited her nephew, and warned him 'it were wise to take the first gap, and keep to the fields: for six months our roads be impassable; for three there be peril of sticking fast by the way; and it were wiser to hawk in a warren, than ride through the clay pits when baked by the sun.'"

"Aunt Tabitha was but a captious old maid," said Miss Priscilla; "but there,

William, is old Sage, the gardener, who used to carry you about like a pink in his button-hole — you must say him welcome.”

De la Bere went towards a venerable old man, who stood at a respectful distance, a rake in one hand, his hat in the other; a few long, silvered hairs waved in the wind, while the remainder of the crop was gathered to a pigtail and trained to his back; his eyes intent upon the fine figure of him to whom he had so often played the nurseryman, while his feet mechanically trod down the gravel which De la Bere's leap had deranged. This greeting had scarcely ended with, of course, much wonder at “Master William's” growth, and a twinkle in the old man's eye as he recognised the voice, when the sisters laid hands upon their brother, and insisted upon shewing him the comforts of their united home.

In going along the straight gravel-walk which led to the house, they passed one of those old-fashioned, many-sided summer-houses, slightly raised above the turf, and glazed all round like a ship's lantern: within was a table, many-

sided as the building, with an open work run all round, and supported by three pieces of wood, which met in the centre, and branched into feet like an hour-glass, only that they were carved and curved with the grace of the Acanthus: on this were sundry china cups and saucers, soft as enamel and transparent as the honeycomb; close to this stood the old table's offset devoted to a high silver urn, a caddy, and teapot. Five straight and high-backed ebony chairs, — carved, twisted, and caned, — still hovered near the table; and one amongst the five remained precisely as placed by the servant.

“ See, dear William,” said the aunt, as they passed the snug pavilion, “ we had not forgotten how you used to enjoy your tea in the open air.”

“ When,” dearest aunt, “ did you ever forget the happiness of others?” said De la Bere, kissing her hand with affection, as his warm heart felt how trifles in love gain the worth which wealth cannot purchase.

“ And there, Willy, dear, was your place, with your favourite peep — what a shame you

did not come sooner!" said the youngest of the three, who, in watching and waiting, had forgotten that hot water could ever grow cold, and had ruined the tea accordingly.

"Well, sister, wait till our supper, and you shall see what atonement I'll make:—and where do we sup?—in the great hall?"

"Oh, no, no!—we leave that for dinners and banquets, and sup in the oak-panelled parlour; and we shall be so cozy and snug!" said, two or three of those united beings whose thoughts and habits were always in unison.

By this time they had gained the entrance-hall, from which sprang the massive oak staircase leading to the sleeping rooms; it was lofty, and open to the pointed roof which met in the centre; on the outside of this rose a huge, weather-beaten vane, which was so contrived as to pass through the ceiling, and tell those within doors from which point of the compass the wind came.

"Ah!" exclaimed De la Bere, looking up at the dial, which he had all but forgotten: "there is the arrow ever flying, ever changing; but not gone yet. Don't you think,

dearest aunt, we De la Beres must love to know which way the wind blows? I never saw a similar contrivance."

"Do you forget," cried the aunt, drawing herself up with more *hauteur* than she usually assumed, — "that the great William de la Bere dared the billows as boldly as he fought at the battle of Hastings? Men who sailed with the conqueror had cause to bless a fair wind, and cherish the thought."

"True, dear aunt," replied De la Bere, smiling at the unwonted tone of her words; "but once housed in old England, we sank the profession of sailor, and ——"

"Come along, Willy," cried sister Mat, interrupting a subject too grave for her bounding spirits; "what does it matter which way the wind blows when we have you with us! you must come and see the state bed-room prepared for yourself, my own great William de la Bere."

"It is all our own work," said Priscilla, pointing to the tapestry, which accorded with a large carved bedstead, with silk curtains stiff enough to stand alone.

Whatever were the intrinsic merits of the performance, it had the grateful praises of an affectionate brother. If, as wont, the half classic, half comic, style of subjects afforded many a merry laugh as he awoke in the morning, he did not feel the less grateful at the present moment; nevertheless, his young and joyous humour could not refrain from a few strokes of criticism.

“Why, sisters dear, who, in the name of mercy, is this? — poor Mr. Pyramus?” asked the brother, looking at a figure lying under a white mulberry-tree, very neatly spitted by a court-dress sword, with a sweet pretty fountain of blood playing into the branches above.

“To be sure, brother, you know the story better than ourselves.”

“And the red handkerchief? — oh! I see — Miss Thisbe’s bloody veil. But the tree — is it meant for a Brobdignag hyacinth?” asked the critic in pretended ignorance, and pointing to a crop of mulberries regularly shaded from blood-red at bottom, to snow-white at top.

“How provoking! you know the sym-

pathetic fruit drank of his blood, and blushed for ever after," said Miss Martha, who was quite as fond of romance as her brother, and who coloured, like her full-sized fruit, at the insult of the critique.

"Don't be angry, dear Mat, I thought the *youngest* always blushed first; but I see I am mistaken. Was it a hot summer's day when poor Pyramus died?" asked the fond brother, with all the ignorant gravity he could assume.

"I shall tell you no more about it — come away," cried the spoiled pet of the family.

"Why did you ask?" said the others, who, with the aunt, were more amused than angry.

"Nay, dearest aunt, law and London smoke have nearly driven classics and poetry out of my head; but these clouds revived the memory of Johnny Dryden's summer, when he says,—

‘The Syrian star

Barks from afar,

And with his sultry breath infects the sky,

The ground below is parch'd, the heavens above us fry;

and look how thirsty the mulberries are, they don't let a drop of blood return to earth."

"You shall look no more at our labours," said Matty, taking her brother's arm: "there, William, look at that old rusty sword, and the great spurs of the great William de la Bere, will these content you? you liked them once;" and Matty's little Norman fingers lifted the huge iron spur which had led to little Master William's ducking; while her bright eyes laughed with malicious recollections.

"I will have another peep for that," cried De la Bere, turning once more to the tapestry, and looking at a compartment which represented Adonis with a Grecian helmet; body-armour, which fitted like a pair of stays; and a something, very like a Highland kilt, which served instead of fig-leaves. "Why, how is this?—he is shooting at a stag trotting under his nose: poor brute! how he looks at the arrow in its haunch with its head sticking up like a duplicate tail, as if he were saying, *et tu Brute!* What do you do there? Come,

come, sisters, I do remember, it should have been a boar."

"So we all said," exclaimed the elders; "but Matty would have a stag."

"Indeed! how sadly unclassical!"

"Boars are such ugly brutes," answered Miss Matty, in defence; "and I said I knew if *we* put in a pig, *you* would cut off its tail;" with this allusion to another of Master William's early feats, Matty gave her brother's arm the hardest pinch her little fingers could achieve, while she once more laughed archly in his face.

"You little wretch!" exclaimed the brother, escaping from the torture — "what are you doing?"

"Only trying to make you squeak, as you did the ——"

William interrupted the speech by a kiss, and declared it was time to descend and think about supper.

Presenting an arm to his honoured aunt, he led her down the oak staircase: while the light-footed sisters vanished like fairies, as

they whirled down an old stone staircase, cut, like a corkscrew, in the wall. Upon arriving in the hall, the old rosy-cheeked butler approached, and said,—

“Ned Ashmead, sir, who brought your trunk, wants to know if you wish to see him.”

“True, true, bid him come,” said William de la Bere; “I forgot to tell you, sisters, I fell in with my squire when I rode Blackbird to the pond *en grand cavalier*.”

Honest Ned Ashmead made his appearance in the wake of the butler, his cheeks rivalling those of his leader, and his eyes sparkling with the light of John Barleycorn; even the presence of the ladies could not quench their mirth, while he made a series of clodhopping bows.

“There, Ned,” said De la Bere, throwing him a crown, in token of their old acquaintance.

“Thank your honour, thank your honour,” repeated Ashmead, while he stooped for the piece which he could not manage to catch.

“I hope, Ned, they have taken care of you in the hall.”

“ Yes, your honour,” he said, with something like a wink, while he passed one hand from his chin downwards.

“ And remember, Ned, if the ale’s strong, it must not make the head weak.”

“ Oh, no, your honour,” answered Ned, with a knowing nod of the said head.

“ And you must not talk too much about ‘ little Master Willum :’ I shall be a counsellor in a year or two, and wear a wig.”

“ I hope it won’t be a green un, your honour, like father’s in the duck-pond,” said Ned Ashmead, with one of his shrewd, yet simple, tones.

“ Go along home, Ned, and think no more about it,” said De la Bere, glad to escape once more from a second sly pinch of the laughing Matty.

In a few minutes they were all settled in the bow-window of the old wainscotted parlour : the aunt was placed in her chair of state, the nephew on her right, and then the happy sisters gathered round as closely as they could. Now his Temple chambers were discussed,—their position, their furniture, and wants ; then

this comfort and that were suggested and offered ; next, they planned their country rambles — in fancy, visited old farmer Alston, and admired his noble avenue of pear-trees — anon, they sat beneath some legendary oaks, which, magnificent and isolated, stud the fields like the landmarks of a forest now no more ; but which, most probably, once extended from Malvern, the favoured hunting-ground of our early kings.

Then came that social, but now exploded meal, the good old-fashioned supper ; and then the ale, bright and clear as amber, was pledged in the long-stemmed glass ; and then, to crown the feast, the old butler brought in the silver flagon, chased, elegant, and rich with the odour of the spicy wine, sobered by the yokes of newlaid eggs ; and then, oh ! how they all grew young ; retraced their childhood's hour, played blindman's buff in their father's castle, and woke a thousand visions of departed joy ; again, they wandered to the present, and the intended barrister practised query and cross-question as to the handsome cornet, the young

Lord Harry, and Priscilla's love for the church, if not for a promising divine into the bargain : and then, to conclude, the batteries were turned, and William de la Bere heard, for the first time, of Julia Saladin—their beautiful pet, their innocent and exquisite flower of the vale. Happy and devoted family ! little did they dream in that sparkling hour of the poison which would spring from the blossom they cherished.

In the morrow's rambles, William de la Bere saw, for the first time, that beauty which had mingled with the themes of their merry evening;—the result is before the reader. And now, after an interval of more than thirty years, let us look upon the picture of the same united family ; yes, the same in heart, in love, and every kindly feeling ; but, alas ! how changed in form and features. There is the aunt, verging to the grave and feeble with extreme old age. The same state chair is rendered easier by cushions which support her back ; and, placed in the same bow-window, the meek expiring Christian is watching the

setting sun, prepared, if so it should be willed, to rise to Heaven on the morrow; and, on the morrow, she was summoned!

Pass we one other year. There is the house, the garden, the quaint pavilion, the clipped hedges, the straight walks, the turf and dial, all as we have seen it drawn; as staid and changeless as if Time had not trod the precincts of the silent dial. And there, gathered on the spot where the reader first beheld them, are William de la Bere and his maiden sisters: the former as seen at Brookes's, the latter in the garb and fashion of an age gone by—the powdered hair, dressed with the high ambition of a pyramid; the falling lappet, the strip of black velvet close round the throat; high handkerchiefs, like driven snow, folding on the neck; the flowered gown of richest satin; the point lace stomacher in front; sleeves just extending beyond the elbow, fringed with ruffles, and met by the white kid gloves. The swelling hoop, the highheeled shoe, will, if aided by the reader's imagination, or by a reference to the plates formerly published by Bowles and Carver, in

St. Paul's Churchyard, give some idea of the change which time had wrought in these spotless and devoted beings.

Yes, from the moment they saw how their brother had perilled his whole of happiness upon one throw, it seemed as if they forgot themselves to watch for the result to him alone. Their stakes in the wide lottery of bliss were withdrawn ; their home became their world ; their suitors were repulsed with all the gentleness of woman, but, also, with that firmness and devotion of which woman alone is capable.

Whether they foresaw chances on which the high-wrought hopes of William de la Bere had never calculated, we cannot take upon ourselves to say ; at least, they appeared to have read their brother's character aright, and knew, that if he lost, he would venture no more. How utterly he was beggared in the heart's affections when Julia Saladin was won by another, is already told : the passion of a love like his could never be again ; till the day of his death he had not changed ; she who, in reality, had been torn from his side,

was, in imagination, enshrined and ever with him. As he had known her young, artless, and innocent—a being born to be great and good—so she ever dwelt within his memory. Not all that happened in the future could destroy this beautiful vision of the past, or lessen his faith in what she might have been. It was a fantasy, we grant; for it were madness to expect the perfection on earth to which the yearnings of the soul aspire; but, when the first agonies of disappointment had passed away, we doubt whether William de la Bere did not sojourn to the grave happier, infinitely happier, in his beauty of delusion, than those around him who purchased truth by attaining the measure of their prayers.

Though Julia Saladin was lost to him, William de la Bere was not alone on earth. Few, perhaps, could have felt as keenly as he did; but, if the wound were deep, so in proportion abounded the holy and healing balm of affection. Thenceforth his sisters dedicated their lives to his, and thenceforth their happiness centred in devising the happiness of a brother's home.

When the Misses Priscilla, Bridget, and Martha, decided upon celibacy, they made no rash vows — affected neither austerity nor costume; but, in the course of time, they became as it were apart from the world: with a something of family pride, they clung to the manners of preceding ages; and, in the end, were left alone in the style of their dress. And yet, when these sisters were seated in their panelled parlour, surrounded by their cabinets and china—by oak, ebony, and walnut, worked and carved into all sorts of shapes, from a spinnet to a spinning-wheel; when they were seated in their old-fashioned garden, now pausing to look upon the dial; now raising a long ivory-handled cane to chide some silken spaniel of Charles's royal breed; now starting in the family coach with four or six horses (according to the state of Lady Tabitha's roads); they, their carriage, costume, and gray-headed servants, seemed more in harmony with all around, than when they were at first presented to the reader's view.

As these dear good old ladies have made their first and last appearance in our pages,

it may be well to add, that with themselves and William de la Bere that noble family became extinct, and their estates have passed to other hands.

It is years since we have visited the venerable pile of Southam, but we have heard, with pleasure, and it says much for the good taste of the present owner, that the house and grounds remain nearly as they were when the De la Bere's were living. Amidst some changes for domestic comfort, we are told that the original character of the whole has been preserved, even to the escutcheons on the doors. One, amidst the changes, certainly startled us not a little; but, as there was a something very like a smile upon our informant's face, we almost doubt whether he were in earnest, when he said, that the old banquetting hall had been changed to a chapel! if so—antiquary though we be—we can only say it might have been put to many a worse purpose; and, if the proprietor's conviction of needing that guide, so essential to all, led to this change, we sincerely rejoice that it has been turned to “a good account at last.”

The curious in relics of a departed age may be glad to be informed, that the great spurs of the great William de la Bere, which urged the "little Willum" into the duck-pond, are still in existence ; and, in the village church, there are records upon records of the De la Bere family. One of this heroic race, if we remember rightly, is lying in his armour, and with his legs crossed, in token of having revived the spirit of his great ancestors and sailed to the holy land. Of this we are quite certain, that nine children, kneeling all of a row, record the prolific virtues of some defunct Mrs. De la Bere, who, with her lord, lies on the monument by the side of which her offspring kneel and pray : we are the more positive on this point, because there is a story preserved of "little Master William," who, being in the family-pew with his great aunt, Lady Tabitha, and sadly weary of the Litany, said, "Auntie dear, will you lend Willy your gold nutmeg-grater to play a game of nine-pins with the little boys and girls."

The request, as may be supposed, was refused, with a threatened rap from an enor-

mous long fan ; but naughty “ little Willum ” could not be silenced until he had said,

“ He was sure it could do them no harm, for they must be as tired of kneeling as he was.”

CHAPTER XVI.

BLANKISLE HALL, IN THE COUNTY OF DORSET.

“ Without, or with, offence to friends or foes,
I sketch yon world exactly as it goes.”

BYRON.

To return to our hero. The London season was over, and the deserted west had assumed its periodical garb of misery ; for, what is so wretched as the mournful silence of a lifeless capital ? Solitude in the country is like a *tête-à-tête* with one we love ; it is the book we most enjoy when most alone ; it is soothing, precious as the prayer we breathe within our closet. But to pass from square to street, and street to square, and see the shutters closed as if death were in every house ; to behold “ The Times ” marshalled in the windows, and with its wide-spread sheet preserving, for once, the *blind* from dust ; to see the papered

nobs, the proud patrician squares fringed, like urn-rugs, with a grass-green border. Oh! this mockery of turf amidst the granite! this show of country in the streets where busy millions flocked but yesterday! This, indeed, is solitude in all its wretchedness.

Such, however, was the picture which London presented, while Melton de Mowbray formed one amidst the many guests at Blank-isle Hall. The opera had closed, and so had Parliament; the members which had sat in one, or pirouetted in the other, had sought another sphere; and the voices, which in either had called forth the thunders of applauding crowds, were heard within the circles of a chosen few.

It is not unfrequently the part of manœuvring mothers to bait their hooks with the gold and glitter of a stylish establishment; what is more, it often takes: men like to visit at the house where every thing is done in the very best manner. Let the cynic sneer, or philosopher laugh, there is something imposing, at least to the mass, in the pomps and vanities of high life. Then, again, when the mother has a

glorious nibble, it is so natural to hint at the luxuries which her dear daughters have known from their infancy; how “she hoped they would never marry—it would be such a trial, unless, indeed, a change of style were uncalled for;” and then, when there comes a positive and palpable bite from the mouth of an innocent gold fish, mammas have, by comparison, such justifiable demands touching settlements and pin-money. Oh, yes! there is nothing like a dash and a splash when portionless daughters are exhibited for sale. Who would look at *le chapeau de paille*, a Claude, a Rubens, if shewn in Duck Alley, Smithfield—admittance only one penny?

The Marchioness of Blankisle was one of those wise mothers who adopted this system, and lived to the verge of, if not a little beyond, her husband’s income. Family pride, it is true, aided and abetted a course equally grateful to father and mother; and, if the marquess sometimes suggested the prudence of saving a something for his dear Helen, this effort of daring policy, on the part of the husband, was quickly overruled by—

“ Nonsense, my dear marquess ; if you think again, I am sure you will agree with my opinion. The most we could save would be nothing to the merits of our dear Helen ; and a little show, a style which becomes the honour of our families — in short, my dear, if you leave this matter to me, I am sure I shall only follow your wishes on the subject.”

“ Very well, my love, we generally think alike. Good night ! God bless you ! ” and the easy and contented marquess would lay his head upon his pillow, and sink to rest.

Barring her ladyship’s spirit of manœuvre, which, in every shape and bearing, must, we confess, be held in abomination, she contrived to make the most delightful of reunions. Lady Blankisle possessed in perfection the enviable tact of bringing people together, whose tastes, pursuits, and powers, though varied and opposite, formed, in the whole, a piquant and harmonious concord. It was neither all sugar, bitter, lemon, or *esprit*. Of no one ingredient — if we except that all the young men were

elders—was there a preponderating influence. She was, in fact—and we use the simile as the highest possible compliment—the unrivalled *Ude of society*. She could extract a something out of nothing by some happy ingenuity of mixture; she could make a golden calf look tender, or a booby palatable. They all went down, they all passed off with *éclat*; for each was brought in and brought out with such exquisite judgment and taste, that calves, boobies, and bores, were made to contribute their quota of amusement.

Of all society, there is none to be compared to that of a fine house in the country well filled; Blankisle Hall afforded the former, and the marchioness's skill provided for the latter.

It was in the course of a fine October month that Melton de Mowbray fulfilled his promise, and arrived with his hunters, hacks, dogs, double-barrels, battering-train, and equipage complete, of a single man of fashion. His reception, on the part of the marquess, evinced the cordial welcome of the old English

nobleman ; and, according to the graduated scale of the marchioness, he stood high in her favour.

Helen, the lovely, gentle Lady Helen, received him as one, who, if welcome at the opera in the scenes of heartless fashion, was infinitely more so in the pure atmosphere of a country life. Their eyes met, and they felt as if in that one meeting glance they had exchanged the written diary of absence ; they read each other's thoughts ; and, if their depth of feeling was still a mystery to others, to themselves the dark, expressive page, was radiant with the living characters of love.

Though mammas, and daughters, too, are ready to allow that, in *les affaires du cœur*, one week in the country is worth a London season, yet the intimacy of a few will often afford less opportunity of a decided *tête-à-tête* than the dense crowds of a fashionable mob. Such Melton de Mowbray found to be the case ; and he rather hailed an approaching dinner-party, as likely to increase than diminish, his share of Lady Helen's society.

There is a latitude amongst men in dis-

cussing those who were born to redeem their grosser thoughts, which leads every man to conceal from his fellows the signs of a passion too generally ridiculed as a weakness and folly ; even the few, whose strength of mind can rise above common opinion, and openly confess the refinement due to woman's influence, are the more likely to shudder with the sense of profanation, if babbling tongues could point to the idols which their hearts have chosen from the many.

Of this feeling, Melton de Mowbray was strongly susceptible, and still more strongly was the feeling echoed on the part of Lady Helen ; not even the marchioness herself could pierce the sacred veil in which their hearts' communing was shrouded. In vain she watched their eyes, and strove to read that fulness of expression, of which we have endeavoured to convey a faint idea, by the image of a dark and beautiful mystery. If this keen sensibility of aught which dared to breathe upon the mirror of their thoughts, heightened their happiness when free from observation, such exquisite reward was purchased by many

a penance. Oft and oft did Mowbray, anxious to assume indifference, ride to cover, and, sportsman though he was, prayed that they might not find. And many a day, when his double-barrel killed, as usual, right and left, he prayed for rain, which might restore him to the side of Lady Helen Fawndove, without betraying the marked attention which he wished to be known to her alone.

If such were his feelings by day, how did he curse in his heart the protracted circulation of the bottle! How insipid and revolting was the tone of conversation which, in those days, sullied the sittings of men who rarely rose till reason had departed; but the fashion of the time left no alternative, and Mowbray had only to submit to the martyrdom with his usual appearance of indifference.

It was on one of these occasions that Mowbray's patience and nerve were more severely tried than he had anticipated. We have mentioned that, in addition to the guests staying beneath the roof of Blankisle Hall, there was to be a grand assemblage of all the country neighbours. The home discussions of the

expected visitors had afforded the satire and amusement in which associates generally indulge. Family after family had been announced; their dresses, manners, and attractions had been criticised and compared with prophecies and dare-says; the half hour before dinner had passed like magic at Lady Blankisle's bidding; the banquet was over, and the ladies were bowed out, when, owing to the numbers, the men gathered into talking groups; little gangways were made in the dessert for the transit of the bottle; and each set was amply provided by the watchful butler. The statesmen collected, where they like to be, at the head; next to these was a knot of county politicians; and next, some jovial squires and rosy parsons, livers on the land, and little learned beyond cool port, hotbishop, and a fox's brush. The younger and more civilised men, who could read as well as ride, and knew London better than their country town, completed the party at the bottom of the table.

The London season, neighbouring covers, horses, dogs, women, had each passed muster

as the bottle circulated ; and the remarks upon the latter became more frequent as the sitting was prolonged.

“ My dear Mowbray,” said the Duke of Dublin, who was on his left, good tempered and joyous as usual, “ I was so glad to hear of your coming.”

“ At all times delighted to add to your grace’s happiness,” said Mowbray with assumed formality, and shrinking from any possible allusion to Lady Helen by his neighbours.

“ Nonsense, Mowbray ; do be what I know you are at heart. I would rather hear you say ‘ d —— it ! Dublin,’ than ‘ grace.’ ”

“ After dinner I always say ‘ grace,’ ” replied Mowbray, with continued gravity.

“ Well, but Mowbray, do you remember how you once rescued me at the opera when ‘ his grace ’ was sitting by one more worthy of the name —— ”

“ Well, what then ? ”

“ Only that now I’m doubly grateful, for you have saved me from the Marchioness —— ”

“ D —— it ! Dublin ” (at your request) ;

“you’re most censorious. Why, the marchioness is the most correct woman in the world: for shame, Duke!”

“You know what I mean — maternal love. She walked me about like a baby in leading-strings, till your letter decided your coming, and then she let me run alone.”

“Indeed! I have heard that her ladyship was providential, and generally kept more strings than one for her bow.”

“And more *beaux* than one for her line,” said a young lieutenant of the guards, who was a guest for the day.

“Her manœuvres would fail if she had not her compliment,” said Sir Charles Wiffington, with one of his imperturbable sneers.

“The devil a compliment did her ladyship ever pay me,” said the lieutenant, laughing at the slight he acknowledged.

“You she deems too young, my dear sir, to know the value of her compliments; they are kept in reserve for those who can purchase promotion.” And, as Sir Charles said this, his full dark eye rested upon Mowbray, to whom he owed something like spite and envy since

the discussion of his monkey's gold tooth-pick.

"Where is Lord Jimmysham?" asked Mowbray, to turn the subject, and willing to appear ignorant of Sir Charles's allusion, or the fact that Lord Jimmysham never left London.

"Jimmysham!" cried Sir Charles, echoing the name. "What a singularly rustic inquiry! and this, too, from Melton de Mowbray! What! not know that the cloud-compelling Jove could not breathe out of the smoke of London! Have you forgotten the words of the poet as he sketches the empty season?—

'The Town's a desert, and where'er we tread,
'Tis still the silent city of the dead;
Our steps are echoed, and we meet, alas!
No living thing but Jimmysham and grass!'"

"Pass the bottle, if you please, Sir Charles," said Lord Betting, who was any thing but sober, and whom Mowbray recognised as one of his sporting friends in Fops' Alley. "You a poet, and forget to start the

ladies first! I propose ‘The health of Lady Helen Fawndove, and a gold christening cup for the winner;’” looking knowingly at our hero as he concluded.

Mowbray’s soft and sleepy eye woke with the flashing of a tiger’s rage, and darted vengeance on the giver of the toast. His lordship recoiled, and looked as silly as a man who is half sobered by a sudden sense of danger. The change startled Mowbray in his turn, and gave him time to regain his self-possession, and remember it was still the custom to give individual toasts.

“A bumper, I presume, my lord?” he said with cool politeness; “but it were an insult to add more than the name: the winner will need no subscription to add to the value of the prize.”

“Lady Helen, and nothing more,” said the Duke of Dublin, filling his glass. “I wish, Mowbray, she were not too clever for me.”

“What! dead beat — not placed?” said Lord Betting, pricking up his ears. “You remember the long odds, Mowbray?”

“ You mistake me, my lord,” said Mowbray, once more flashing fire ; “ when a lady is at stake, I never lay more than a horsewhip : and that is, perhaps, more than your lordship would wish to take, or desire to win. Having drunk your toast, I beg to defer our bets until to-morrow.”

His lordship was silent, and not quite knowing how to take the words, he took a second bumper instead—he could not be mistaken there.

Sir Charles had watched Mowbray, and quietly enjoyed a few pangs which he had seen him betray ; it was not quite without malice that he turned the conversation, by saying—

“ What a thousand pities that women will attempt a smile when they have passed their climacteric !”

“ I don’t see why an old woman should not laugh as well as a young one,” said an embryo squire, with a heart swimming in the grape.

“ Forgive me, gay juvenile !” said Sir Charles, with his never-changing composure ; “ you are infinitely wrong ; smiles and dimples

are the seed of wrinkles ; and wrinkles, tortured into smiles, are frightful as a grinning monkey. What say you, Mowbray ? have you not learnt to be of my opinion ? ”

“ Really, Sir Charles, you have the advantage of me, by keeping a monkey to perfect the study of comparison.”

“ Ah, poor Jackomie ! But, what brought him before you ? ”

“ Reflection, Sir Charles. I have not forgotten you once had the compliment of being taken for a porter in Jackomie’s cause, and—”

“ True, true,” said Sir Charles, interrupting any further reflections on the past ; “ but, I am sure you must agree with me, and allow it is melancholy to see dear Lady Blankisle smile ; and, when particularly gracious, oh ! ’tis positively painful : her face is puckered like a powder-puff—is it not ? ”

“ Now, Sir Charles, you have the advantage of years, and the poet’s figurative image is lost upon my ignorance. Is your powder-puff a variety of monkey ? ”

“ Ah,” answered the baronet, who was some ten years senior to those around him ;

“ I forget what mere children of the world you are compared to myself; you cannot remember hair-powder in its highest acme, and, probably, never saw your mammas do penance in a white sheet.”

The question was general, but Sir Charles's looks were fixed on Mowbray as the words were uttered; his blood curdled at the simple question, and the spirit of vengeance against the slayer of his mother's honour was, for an instant, turned against Sir Charles. “ Did he mean that blow?” he said within himself, as he fixed his flashing eyes upon the baronet: if intended, the bland and quiet expressive face gave no grounds for such interpretation. As Mowbray did not immediately reply, Sir Charles's eye sailed quietly right and left for an answer.

“ Not I,” said one.

“ What do you mean?” asked another.

“ D —— n it, Sir Charles,” said Lord Betting; “ I hope your mother was not a ——”

“ Lady Wiffington was an angel—thank you, nevertheless, my lord, for your flattering hopes,” said Sir Charles, with a bow which

gave him an opportunity of remarking the penance which Mowbray's lips were doing—they were white as a sheet.

“ Pray give us the light of your years,” said Mowbray, compelling his lips to speak if he could not command the blood to circulate; “ we are dying to hear the penance of an angel, and tale of a powder-puff.”

Others seconded the request with some oaths and jokes, which we are willing to omit.

“ I was but a boy,” continued Sir Charles, “ but shall never forget my poor mother under the hands of Mons. Pommade, the grand coiffeur of his day. I think I see her now, seated in her *boudoir à poudre*, swaddled in white, and submitting like a saint to the ceremony of laying the first stone.”

“ The headstone, I presume you mean,” said Mowbray.

“ Precisely! yes, as the hair was doomed to tower aloft, it was necessary to lay a foundation to build upon.”

“ Did they put any coins, the king's head, underneath?” asked his grace of Dublin.

“ I hope so; for you know the old pro-

verb," said the merry lieutenant, "two heads are better than one."

"No!" said Mowbray; "but I've heard that more heads than one crept under the tower—it had its living inhabitants: was it not so, Sir Charles?"

"One would think you had been a witness in your own case," said Sir Charles; "but it's an o'er true tale. As the foundation was an affair too serious to renew every day, the command of 'increase and multiply' was sometimes practised in the tower."

"I think the less you say on that head the better," observed the lieutenant; "let us have the poet's simile of a powder-puff."

"Very true. Well, then, we will fancy the hair built up around, and towering above its foundation; my poor mother's face covered by a mask with horn eyes, and as little like her features as sin to virtue. Then came the immortal architect——"

"To lime-wash his building?" asked Mowbray, or some one else.

Sir Charles, without noticing the suggestion, continued, like a guide who has been

put out, and repeated, "Then came the immortal architect, with his *chef-d'œuvre* in his hand ——"

"And what sort of 'chay' was that? I don't speak French. Did it go with one hand or two?" asked the young country squire.

"Why! that was his powder-puff."

"And pray, what was that like?"

"Like an old lady's smiles, or a young elephant's trunk. The latter is the better; for though, when wrinkled and puckered, it resembled the painful smiles of an old woman's face, it lengthened, at will, longer than face ever grew."

"And was it this ugly machine that gave the *coup de grace*?" asked Mowbray.

"So thought our mothers, and, with it, they learned the moral of 'dust to dust;' as Monsieur Pommade poured forth flour enough to make a scarcity of bread, and enveloped Lady Wiffington in perfumed clouds *couleur de rose*."

"And befitting an angel," added Mowbray to fill up the sentence, and laying a peculiar but indescribable emphasis on the word

“ angel.” “ However,” he continued, “ we thank you, Sir Charles, for your lesson in hair-dressing ; your knowledge and acquirements are endless. What an odious fashion ! So, poor Lady Wiffington’s tower was turned into a powder-magazine.”

“ Ha ! ha ! how facetious ! but it is extraordinary, though surrounded by sparks, *she* never went off. So you were too young to remember Lady De Mowbray’s *toilette à poudre* ?”

“ Sir Charles,” replied Mowbray, with a voice of such deep concentrated force, as to produce something like a nervous twitch on the features of the calm and satirical baronet ; “ *you* may forget that I lost my mother as an infant ; but I shall never forget your description of to-night.”

“ Confound it, Dublin ! do pass the bottle,” said Lord Betting. “ Talking of powder, are you all primed ? Lord Blankisle says we must go to the ladies ; so, d—— it, let’s drink them again in a bumper.”

The notion was seconded by some dozen voices, at least. Shortly after, the statesmen

ceased to discuss the loaves and fishes ; having taken wine enough to drown the former and swim the latter, they thought it time to adjourn. The squires and parsons followed in their train, having first cleared their throats by " the brush," in a bumper once more. The juniors, with Sir Charles Wiffington at their head, closed the rear ; and the men relieved that heavy, protracted tedium, which women, sweet flatterers ! were wont to complain of in those days.

" And is it ever so ?" said Mowbray to himself, as he sought the drawing-room, and dwelt on the parting look of his misguided mother. " Can we never be secure of the happiness we build upon ? How little did I look for misery to-night !"

Music, cards, and conversation, filled up the time until the carriages were announced ; and, in the anxious and expressive welcome of Lady Helen's eyes, Mowbray found that opiate which alone can soothe the pangs of a suffering mind. A slight cold, or a something, excused Lady Helen from the piano ; and she accepted Mowbray's challenge to a game of

chess. If their moves were slow, their blunders endless, what did it matter? They had gained the plea of silence to others, of being to themselves amidst the many. Never were two beings more tranquil and blessed amidst the destruction they looked upon. Castles were taken, knights overthrown, bishops lost, and royalty itself in danger; but the voice which dared to say, "Check to the king!" was accompanied by a smile of the mouth, and sweet confession of the eyes, which spake to themselves of peace, happiness, and love, amidst the wreck of kingdoms.

At length, however, the succession of carriages announced for departure put a stop to this gentle contest. Lady Helen was called upon to assist the marchioness in saying "Adieu!" and expressing her regrets that the guests "could think of running away so early." In the mean time, Mowbray's arm was offered to some favoured dowager, and cloaks, and shawls, and so forth, presented in form. Having performed some such service, he was crossing the old hall, and about to re-enter the drawing-room, when his name

was pronounced by a man, whose person was muffled up to the eyes, like a race-horse in winter.

“ Beg pardon, De Mowbray,” said the unknown, turning back the flap of a black velvet jockey cap, and pulling down a shawl neck-cloth to give vent to his words; “ beg pardon—eh! don’t know me in my body clothes? Betting—Lord Betting.”

“ I beg your lordship’s pardon,” said Mowbray, with a distant bow. “ I really did not recognise you.”

“ No, that will never do; there’s no need to beg my pardon, though I wished to beg yours.”

“ Indeed!”

“ Yes, De Mowbray; Dublin tells me he thinks I offended you.”

“ Not quite, my lord; I was only fearful you might.”

“ Upon my soul I did not mean it; but the marquess’s wine is so confoundedly strong, that it gallops off with the brains.”

“ In which case, my dear lord, the tongue is apt to take the bit between its teeth, and run away without them.”

“The very words I wished to say; and now the coffee has restored the little sense I ever had, will you believe me when I add, that I’m devilish sorry if I said a word that could offend. Am I forgiven? and here ’s my hand.”

“Think no more about it,” said Mowbray, accepting the proffered hand of the rattling but inoffensive Lord Betting, and wishing him a hearty “good night.”

When men are very happy, they are vastly forgiving, especially when the offender is about to turn his back.

“Good night! good night!” echoed his lordship. “Fine moon for a gallop! As soon ride in a teakettle as be cooped up in our old family tub. Where the devil did I leave my spurs?”

Mowbray, leaving his lordship to find his spurs and arrange his spatterdashes, returned to the coterie which had gathered round the drawing-room fire. In vain had the butler hinted at the hour, by placing an illuminated host of bed-candles on the table. These were burned for half an hour, at least, while the

guests of the house talked over the guests of the day, in which delightful employment we are bound to confess, that Mowbray's half-satiric tone, and Lady Helen's quiet, playful originality of humour, added not a little to the attic salt with which this supper was rendered piquante and palatable.

“Positively backbiting!” cries Miss Prim, who reads without glasses at the age of ——. A little naughty, we allow, though vastly amusing; but we paint our characters true to nature, and think how lucky it is there is one rule without an exception, “None are perfect!” And, what is more, we fear that, to mere man, mortal perfection would seem most excessively insipid.

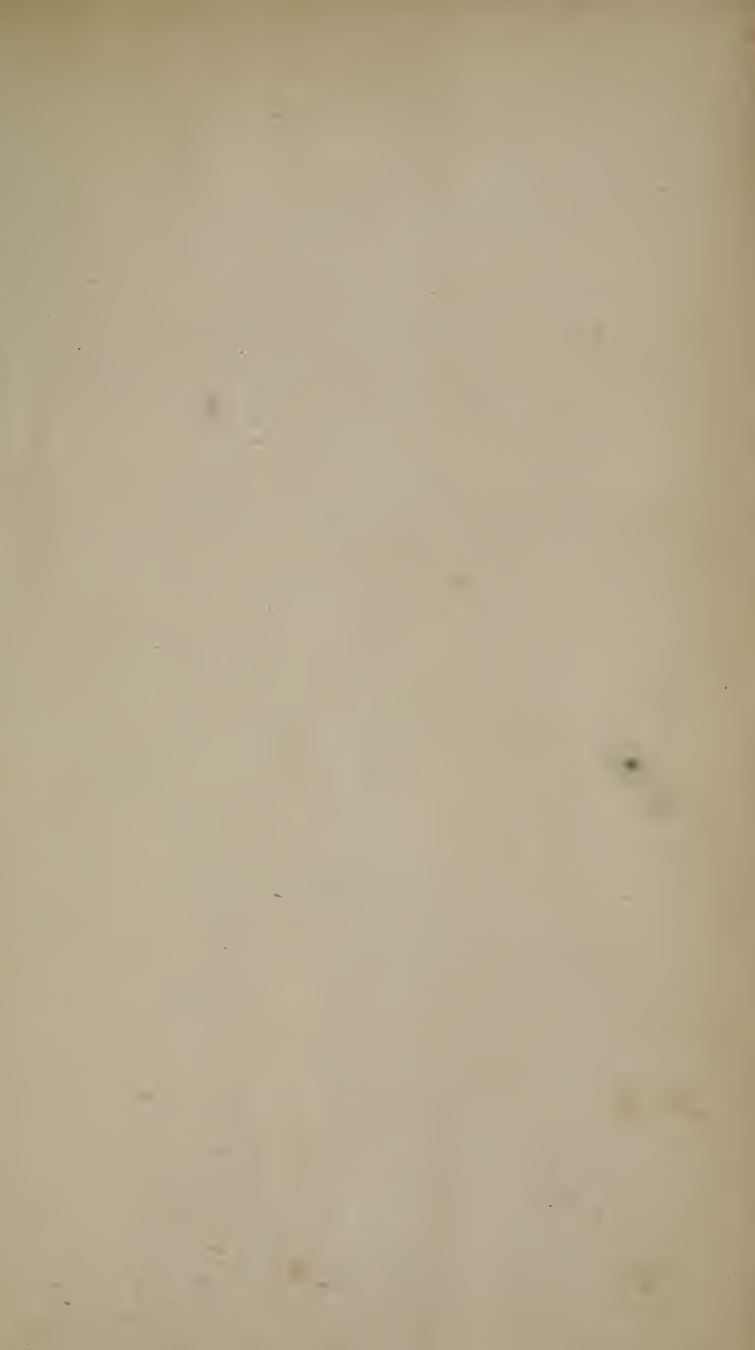
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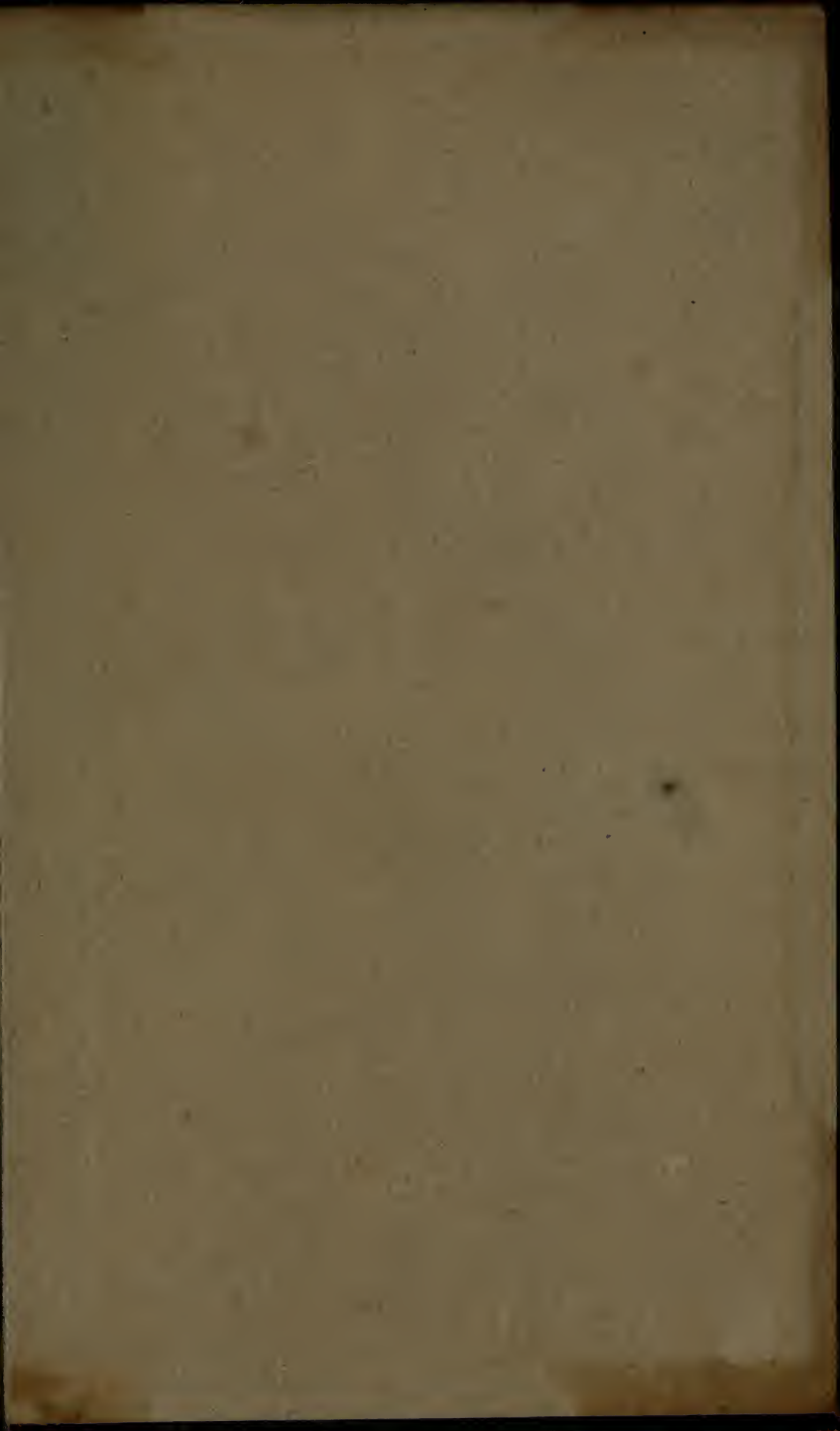
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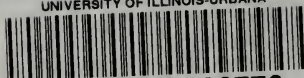








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